

COMMENTARY  
ON THE EPISTLES  
CORINTHIANS to THESSALONIANS

12.10.90  
Library of the Theological Seminary.

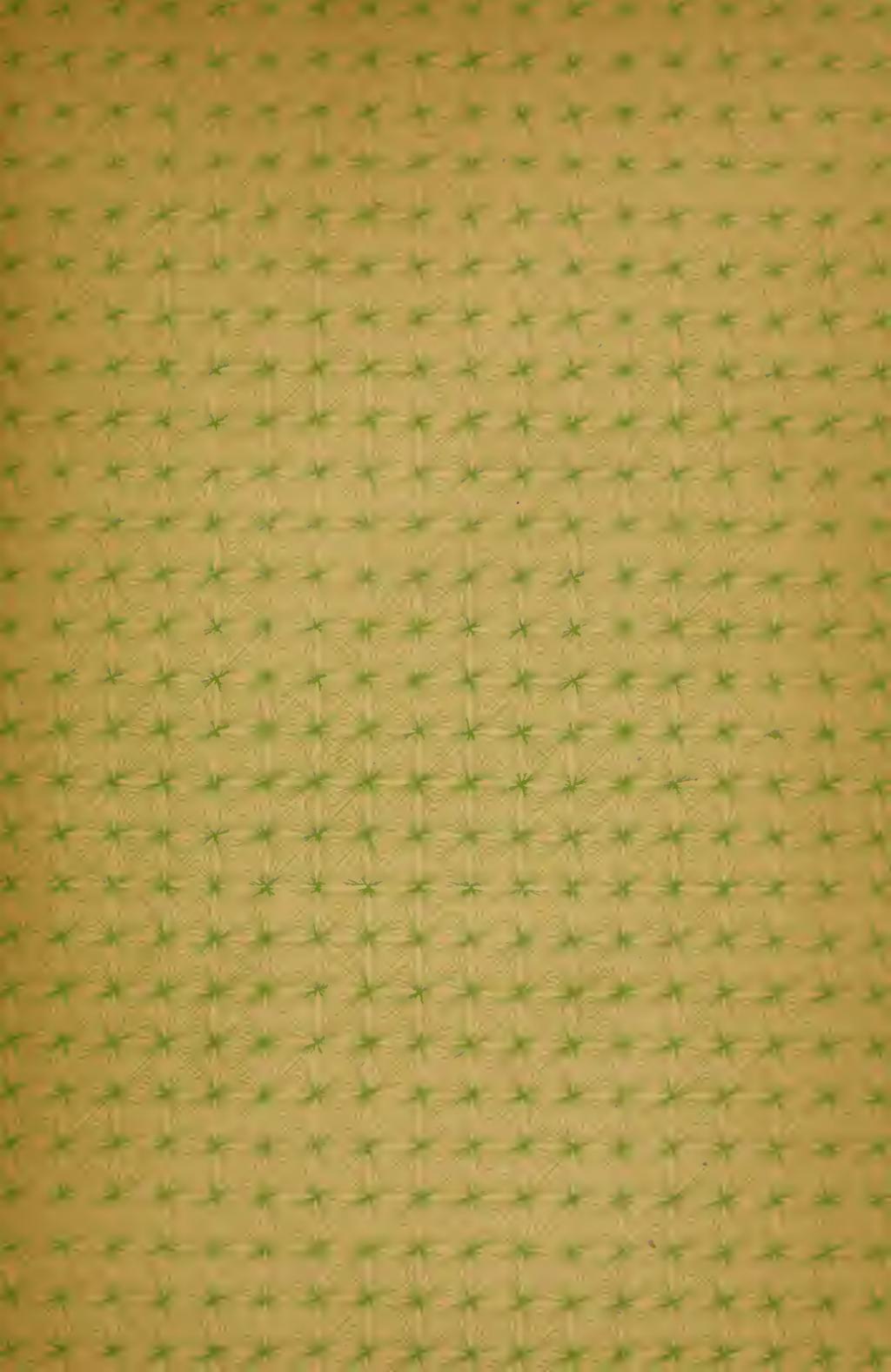
PRINCETON, N. J.

Division BS2341

Section A512

Number V. 5

Shelf.









AN

AMERICAN COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

EDITED BY

ALVAH HOVEY, D.D., LL.D.

v.5

PHILADELPHIA.  
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,  
1420 CHESTNUT STREET.



# COMMENTARY

ON THE

## EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

BY

PROFESSOR WILLIAM ARNOLD STEVENS.

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,  
1420 CHESTNUT STREET.

---

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1890, by the  
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,  
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

---

# INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

---

A letter, if it fall into the hands of other readers than those to whom it was first addressed, needs an Introduction, perhaps, more than any other writing. Especially is this the case with the letters contained in the New Testament Scriptures—documents saved to our time from an ancient and vanished world; all of them, it is true, parts of one apostolic message of the Spirit of Christ to his churches, yet each with a history, an individuality, and a mission of its own. The Epistles to the Thessalonians are among the earliest writings of the New Testament (preceded, it is probable, only by James), and the earliest by several years from the hand of the Apostle Paul. The most ancient copies contain the text alone—no preface or note explanatory of their occasion or history. The present Introduction will treat, first, of *The City* of Thessalonica; second, of *The Church*; third, of *The Occasion and Object* of the First Epistle; fourth, of its *General Character and Contents*. Other topics, such as the History of the Text, and the Genuineness and Integrity of the Epistle, without which an Introduction can scarcely be called complete, are deemed less suitable to a commentary on the English text.

## I. THE CITY.

Thessalonica, in Paul's time, was the metropolis, the political and commercial capital of Northern Greece. From the earliest historic period it was a seaport of Macedonia; in B. C. 315, it was enlarged by Cassander, and received the name Thessalonica, of which the modern name, Salonica, is an obvious abbreviation, still retaining the same penultimate accent. It was situated at the northwestern corner of the Ægean Sea, at the extreme end of the long Thermaic Gulf,—now the Gulf of Salonica,—with which the Ægean terminates on the northwest. In ancient times, as now, the traveler, as he neared the head of the gulf, beheld facing him an imposing walled city, broad based at the water's edge, and narrowing upward toward the fortified angle high on the mountain side. Unlike many of the older Greek cities, its wharves were close to its principal streets and buildings. Thessalonica was not built, like Athens or Corinth, around an acropolis, distant from the shore. The walls were about five miles in circuit. Back of the city the mountains rise still higher to the north and east. Looking down the blue bay, some fifty miles off, the majestic summit of Olympus—snow capped—is seen against the sky.

As a commercial emporium, it was second, among Greek cities, only to Corinth and Ephesus; the fertile and populous provinces of the interior created an extensive traffic of imports and exports alike. The construction, under the empire, of the Via Egnatia had added to its importance and prosperity. This was the great land route between Rome and her eastern dominions, the main line connecting the Imperial city with Byzantium, Antioch, and Jerusalem. It was, as Cicero said, “in the heart of the empire.” It was

not only the seat of government of the province of Macedonia, and its most populous city, but it was virtually the capital of Greece. Vessels from all parts of the Mediterranean were seen in her roadstead; the "Egnatian" was the eastern extension of the "Appian" Way, and kept the provincial city in constant communication, by the swiftest posts, with Rome, as well as with the East. It passed through the heart of the city, forming a broad, straight street parallel with the shore. The Thessalonians would be familiar with the figures and the pageants that Milton has pictured on the Appian Way, nearer Rome:

"Prætors, proconsuls to their provinces  
Hasting or on return in robes of state;  
Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power,  
Legions and cohorts, turms of horse, and wings;  
Or embassies from regions far remote,  
In various habits on the Appian road."

Thus the newly formed church was soon heard of afar, and became "an example"; "From you," writes the apostle, "the word of the Lord hath sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place."

Its ancient population cannot be estimated with any accuracy, but it was pretty certainly larger than now. It has been rapidly increasing in recent years; the estimate in 1884 was one hundred and twenty thousand, over against one hundred thousand in 1880. It is destined soon to attain a size and importance unknown in its past checkered history. A recent visitor to the city says:<sup>1</sup> "The railway which connects it with Belgrade and Vienna is completed all but a very few miles between Nisch and Pristina. When this is done, not only will the rich plains of Upper Macedonia, Servia, and Bulgaria be brought within easy access of the sea, but it is expected that through Salonica will lie the main route to Egypt, India, and the East, as in former days did the great thoroughfare between Rome and Constantinople. The overland mail will then leave the shores of Europe at Salonica, instead of Brindisi, and an economy of about thirty hours will be effected. If Turkish stupidity will only not throw obstacles in the way, there is no reason why Salonica should not rival Smyrna, and become the Marseilles of the Eastern Mediterranean."

The Jewish colony was larger, it would seem, than Paul had found at Philippi; they had "a synagogue." (Acts 17:1.) At present the Jews nearly or quite outnumber the other races,—Greeks, Bulgarians, Turks, and all,—and control the leading branches of business. In the time of the apostle they could have formed no such preponderant element, and Dr. Dods can scarcely be right in assuming that "the population was largely Jewish." But their synagogue, with its weekly services of prayer to "the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9), and its public readings of the Old Testament Scriptures, had prepared the way for the reception of the gospel and the establishment of this flourishing church.

Politically, it was a "free city" (*urbs libera*), as were also, for instance, Tarsus and Athens, vested with the privilege—prized by no people more than the Greeks—of local self-government. No Roman garrison could be quartered within its walls. It was free from interference in its local affairs on the part of the Roman provincial governors; even the power of life and death lay with its chief magistrates. In Thessalonica, these magis-

<sup>1</sup> "Brit. and For. Ev. Review," 1886, p. 226.

trates, seven in number, bore the title of Politarch, as we learn from Luke, whose accuracy on this point has been in modern times confirmed by the testimony of ancient inscriptions. There was also the usual local assembly, called the Demos, and probably a senate (*Βουλὴ*).

But it is the moral and religious life of the Thessalonian city that is of chief interest to the reader of these letters. Many questions spring up in the mind that require for their discussion a larger space than would here be appropriate. Was Thessalonica, like Athens, a "religious" city, and "full of idols"? What type of Paganism did the apostle find here? what standards of social morality? what basis in the life and character of this population for Christian instruction? or what providential preparation for the reception of the gospel? Some of these points will be briefly touched upon in the following pages both of the Introduction and of the Commentary. The inquiry concerning the preparation for the gospel, as has already been shown, finds partial answer in the presence of the Jewish colony and its synagogue. Speaking generally, however, Thessalonica was a city of Greeks—Greeks of the north, a race harder, less effeminate, and less sensualized than the bulk of the population in Ephesus or in Corinth. Their religion was that pagan idolatry which adored the gods of Olympus, the sacred and majestic mountain which, on clear days, was in full view as one looked across the bay. This legendary faith of their ancestors still kept its hold upon the imagination, and to an extent upon the heart. That they "had long lost all practical belief in the Pagan religion," as Farrar assumes, we cannot admit to be true of the mass of the people. The Olympian system of the poets was no longer an object of faith, if, indeed, it ever had been; but local superstitions, and the worship of native demi-gods and deities, did not so easily vanish before philosophy and doubt. To the poor and the uncultivated, Paganism was still a worship, and when they became Christians, it was to "turn from idols," and to offend demoniac powers, who, they perhaps thought with dread, could hurt if they could not help. That they worshiped the deities of their race with a certain sincere faith and fear, there is every reason to believe. Yet the idolatry of the age was itself frightfully immoral; a wealthy commercial city like Thessalonica revealed much that was worst in the national religion. Its household art; its legends; its public festivals and processions; its encouragement of nameless vice and sensuality—are familiar to readers of classical literature, and have been treated at length by many writers. What might have been seen in Corinth of the Fourth Century B. C., has been told by Becker in his *Charicles*; Corinth was no better four centuries later,—only worse,—and Thessalonica would not fail to import its fashions and its follies. Prof. Fisher<sup>1</sup> has clearly and candidly set forth the leading features of the popular religion at this time in Greek and Roman communities, touching also upon the morality of ancient heathenism. Others, as Tholuck and Friedländer, have exhibited more fully, and in still darker colors, the debasement and degradation entailed by the Paganism of the classical world. One of the saddest phases at the period when Christianity came was the moral hopelessness which shut in those who felt most deeply the evils of their life. This feature impressed the Apostle Paul, who again and again characterizes the Gentiles as men who have no hope. This is, indeed, the most striking ethical phenomenon of the age: the sense, in some of its noblest spirits, of the burden of life, the utter emptiness of existence, and the impenetrable darkness of the future.

<sup>1</sup> "Beginnings of Christianity," chapters 3, 4, and 6.

From the opening paragraph in the twentieth of Acts, it appears that Paul revisited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey, both going and returning, A. D. 53, 54. It is supposed, also, from allusions in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, that there were subsequent visits (see 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:13) while journeying in that region after his return from the imprisonment in Rome, A. D. 61-63.

## II. THE CHURCH.

The Thessalonian Church was founded A. D. 52, only a few months before the writing of the First Epistle. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, had come directly from Philippi, leaving Luke behind, it appears, to have oversight of the recently established church. Though still suffering from his injuries, Paul proceeds at once to his task. The story of his ministry in Thessalonica occupies but one short paragraph in Acts. Luke was not here an eyewitness; his narrative is no longer in the first person, as in the preceding chapter, and lacks somewhat the graphic circumstantiality with which he recounts their Philippian experiences. He relates (we render freely):

"They came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. Paul, according to his custom, went in, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Old Testament Scriptures, explaining the prophecies and showing that it was necessary, for their fulfillment, that the Messiah should suffer and arise from the dead; and 'this Jesus,' said he, 'whom I am proclaiming unto you, is the Messiah.' And some of the Jews were persuaded, and attached themselves to Paul and Silas; likewise a great number of devout Greeks, and of women of high rank, not a few.

"But the Jews, moved with jealousy, and taking with them some of the city rabble, gathered a crowd and set the city in an uproar. And they assaulted the house of Jason, and sought for them, to bring them into the Assembly of the people. But, not finding them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren to the Politarchs, shouting: 'These men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Jason has entertained them; and all of them are acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, declaring that there is another king, Jesus.' And the multitude and the Politarchs were alarmed when they heard these things; and they took security from Jason and the rest, and then dismissed them. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea."

From this account of its origin, and from the two short letters written a few months later, not very much can be gained concerning the history and distinctive features of the little community which the apostle addresses as The congregation of the Thessalonians that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. A few features appear, however, that interest us at once in this young church, Paul's pride and joy.

It had for the most part a Gentile membership. A few of the first converts were Jews: a larger number (including the above-mentioned women of rank) Gentiles, presumably Greeks by race. The latter, although not, strictly speaking, proselytes, had been worshipers with the Jews in their synagogue. All these converts were the fruit of three Sabbaths' or weeks' preaching. Afterward a much larger number of converts were won directly from the Pagan community; for we find Paul, in the First Epistle, addressing his readers as those who had under his preaching turned from the worship of idols to that of the true God.

It is commonly taken for granted that the three or four weeks spoken of in Acts embrace the whole period of the apostle's sojourn at this time in Thessalonica. Rigenbach controverts the supposition that Paul remained longer; more recently, Godet also assumes

that he "left the city and its beloved church after a stay of about four weeks."<sup>1</sup> But both of Paul's letters imply a longer period of personal labor and instruction. He verifies certain facts of his ministry by appealing to the personal knowledge of his readers in a way which fully justifies the inference that he had been with them for a longer time than the mere week or two following the conversion of the most of those whom he addressed. For example, he reminds them of his freedom from mercenary motives and the man-pleasing spirit, of his daily labor for self-support, and how he instructed them one by one in the ways of Christian duty. The latter reminiscence (compare 1 Thess. 2:11, 12) of itself implies a period of continued personal labor. And the whole appeal to their personal testimony on the points referred to would lose much of its force if Paul had left the city after the third Sabbath, when the majority of his Gentile converts could have known him but a very few days. Still more decisive is the allusion to these Gentile converts as having, at the time of his arrival among them, "turned from idols." This cannot be meant of the "devout Greeks" mentioned in Acts 17:4, for, as the term "devout" (*σεβομένων*) implies, they were already worshipers of the God of the Jews. They must have been subsequent accessions from the Pagan population. We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion that the apostle remained at least several weeks after his three Sabbaths of synagogue work before he was driven from the city by the Jews. That Luke does not mention it in the passage in Acts, a second-hand and closely condensed account, is not surprising, and forms no serious objection to the supposition.

It was *composed of the poor*. It is to men who "work with their hands" that the letters are written—tradesmen and mechanics, who would become dependent upon others if they neglected daily labor. (Compare 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 2 Thess. 3:12.) This, however, would not distinguish it from others among the early churches. "Blessed are ye poor, for *yours* is the kingdom of God," expresses the constitutive principle that has ever prevailed in the history of the Church of Christ. But it was no ordinary poverty that tested the patience and fidelity of the Thessalonians. It is, doubtless, of them, as well as of the Philippian and other Macedonian churches, that Paul writes to the Corinthians "that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and *their deep poverty* abounded unto the riches of their liberality." (2 Cor. 8:2, Rev. Ver.) The whole of the fine tribute to the zeal and liberality of the Macedonian Christians, contained in the chapter cited, belongs in no slight part, one is impelled to think, to the Thessalonians, of whom Paul could emphatically say, they "gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God."

The *prominence of women in its membership* is a feature mentioned by Luke which marks the Thessalonian Church in common with others of Macedonia. Here, as at Philippi and Berea, women of rank and influence early identified themselves with the new movement. Bishop Lightfoot is undoubtedly correct in assuming that the apostle's work was thus strongly reinforced. The conditions of life in Northern Greece were in this respect very favorable as compared with the cities of Asia Minor, where Paul had labored hitherto. "The extant Macedonian inscriptions," says Lightfoot,<sup>2</sup> "seem to assign to the sex a higher social influence than is common among the civilized nations of antiquity. In not a few instances a metronymic takes the place of the usual patronymic, and in other cases a prominence is given to women which can hardly be accidental. But, whether I am right or not in the conjecture that the work of the gospel was in this respect aided by

<sup>1</sup> "Expositor," Feb., 1885.

<sup>2</sup> "On Philippians," page 56.

the social condition of Macedonia, the active zeal of the women in this country is a remarkable fact, without a parallel in the apostle's history elsewhere, and only to be compared with their prominence at an earlier date in the personal ministry of our Lord."

Like the sister church at Philippi, *it had sprung up amid persecution*. Expressions in both letters to the Thessalonians show that the persecuting activity of their enemies continued after the apostle's departure. It could hardly be otherwise. The number of Jews was probably larger than in any other Macedonian city, and their malignity was unrelenting. Thus the church was from the very first a suffering church, to whom "it had been granted" not only to believe on Christ, "but also to suffer in his behalf." The praise of its fidelity and its heroism speedily went abroad among all the churches of the empire. The Saviour's message to the church at Smyrna is strikingly applicable to the case of the Thessalonians, and reads, indeed, like a summary of the apostle's letter at this time: "I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer." (Rev. 2:8, 9, Rev. Ver.)

We come now to an inquiry equally important for our insight into the inner life of the church, and for the proper understanding of the letters addressed to it; namely, as to *the basis of its faith*. The letters assume an instructed faith, a more or less fully developed body of Christian teaching; in other words, a theology. Now what was the elementary theology that the church had received—the doctrinal basis of its faith and life? The epistles themselves have been made to deliver one-sided testimony on this point; they have been interpreted as didactic and theological documents, rather than as personal, casual letters,—quite perversely, as will appear evident when we come to consider their occasion and object. The inquiry must take into account other sources than the letters alone, and is a necessary requisite to a proper understanding of their contents.

It is apparent, from the account in Acts, that, on entering Thessalonica, Paul took as his main theme the supremacy of the slain and risen Jesus—of him who had been proven by his death and resurrection to be the Christ-king of prophecy. The two letters also dwell upon a second theme—the Parousia—Christ's return to pronounce judgment upon his foes and to establish his kingdom. On these considerations is founded the theory that the religion of the Thessalonian Church at this period was a "Messianic Christianity." It is supposed not only that their faith was rudimentary as regards their conscious appropriation of the gospel (Paul refers, in the third chapter of the First Epistle, to what "was lacking" in this respect), but that the gospel message itself as delivered to them was of a peculiarly Messianic type; that they had but one article of faith,—Jesus is the Messiah,—with emphatic stress laid upon his promised return. To serve God and to await his return from heaven—these were "the two poles of their Christian life."<sup>1</sup>

This view bases itself mainly upon the observed contrast between the doctrinal topics of these two, and of the subsequent epistles of Paul, especially Romans and Galatians, but including First and Second Corinthians. In what he writes to the Thessalonians, the apostle does not once mention the law, nor allude to the hopeless bondage of the soul under its dominion. The reign of grace and the glories of the new free life in Christ are not dwelt upon. In fact, according to Sabatier, Paul had taught them nothing more than what he terms "primitive Paulinism." "The apostle of the Gentiles began, like the others, by preaching the impending judgment of God, and portraying, as did John

<sup>1</sup> See Immer, "Theologie des Neuen Testaments," 1877, page 217.

the Baptist, the wrath to come.”<sup>1</sup> Professor Jowett has supported this view at some length.<sup>2</sup> He finds allusions in the Epistles to the Corinthians to a change in the apostle’s teaching. In the earlier stage of his ministry, his conceptions of the kingdom of God clothed themselves in the traditional imagery of Judaism. It is to this stage of his experience that he refers when he writes: “Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more.” (2 Cor. 5:16, Rev. Ver.) Thus the church in Thessalonica had received from him a Judeo-Christian gospel; and this is the phase of Christianity which is reflected in the First Epistle. Jowett even seems to suppose that, when Paul, in his letter to the Philippians (4:15), refers back to “the beginning of the gospel,” he has in mind this rude and undeveloped type of Christian doctrine; that, within the four or five years after the writing of First Thessalonians, and before either First or Second Corinthians was written, he had broken away from these trammels, and attained to larger and more spiritual conceptions.

There are others who would scarcely assent to the principles of interpretation followed by the above critics, but who, notwithstanding, admit this theory of a marked and notable progress in doctrine on the part of the Apostle Paul during the interval in question. Principal Edwards, in the Introduction to his Commentary on First Corinthians, writes: “During the four or five years that have elapsed, few stirring events have occurred. The apostle has spent a large portion of the time at Ephesus, with Apollos for his companion. Whether the influence of Alexandria, or closer acquaintance with Greek ideas, or his own insight, gave him the clue, the result is the growth of a peculiar theology, which mainly rests on the conception of a mystical union between Christ and the believer. Never for a moment wavering in his belief in the supernatural facts of Christianity, which have brought to pass so great a revolution as the conversion of the persecutor into an apostle, and always acknowledging their authority over his spirit, he has at length discovered a principle that will explain their inner meaning, transform his hopes of the speedy return of Christ in his kingdom from earthly to spiritual, and render love to Christ—not a short-lived affection or a mere feeling of thankfulness, but an undying, holy well-spring of zeal and absolute consecration to the service of the living and glorified Jesus, into communion with whom he has entered, and from whose abiding presence he derives all grace. In short, the difference between the two Epistles to the Thessalonians and the less simple and pathetic, but more profound, Epistles to the Corinthians, lies in the new conception that sustains the keenly philosophical reasonings of the apostle in the latter concerning Christ, whom he knows no more after the flesh, but after the spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

To allow this position is to put the interpretation of the two epistles before us on a false footing. For we have to do not merely with the explicit doctrinal teachings of two or three paragraphs, but with the terms and phraseology employed by the apostle throughout them both. If the church and its teacher were still in the swaddling clothes of a “Messianic Christianity,” the letters take on a different tone—the force of the words is other than it has usually been considered, and even the ethical precepts belong to a different plane of Christian thought. The question is not merely the historical one as to the status of one or more of the apostolic churches at a given epoch; it is indispensably requisite to the elucidation of these two first documents from the hand of Paul that they be viewed

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier, “*L’Apôtre Paul*,” 1881, page 93.

<sup>2</sup> “*Epistles of St. Paul*,” 1859.

<sup>3</sup> Principal Edwards, “*Commentary on First Corinthians*,” Introd., page xix.; see also Farrar, “*Messages of the Books*,” pages 185, 186.

against the proper background—that background of faith and doctrine which may reasonably be presupposed in the persons addressed.

It is difficult to see how the above-mentioned view can be held without impugning the historical authority of the Acts of the Apostles, and reconstructing the entire narrative of Paul's missionary life. The apostle was not now in the beginning, but in the middle of his missionary career. In A. D. 52, when he entered Thessalonica, he had been preaching the gospel for fifteen or sixteen years. He had founded churches in Cilicia and in Central Asia Minor. In his first preaching at Antioch, in Pisidia, he emphasized the distinctive truths of the Pauline gospel: "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38, 39, Rev. Ver.)

But, turning from Acts to the later epistles, there we find equally convincing testimony. The Galatian churches had been founded before Paul came to Philippi and Thessalonica. In writing to the Galatians, he gives no hint that he is presenting to them a phase of the gospel in any wise different from that which he had first taught them, or even an advance upon previous teaching. He defends the gospel that *he had preached* among them. (1:11.) He relates his controversy at Antioch with Peter, which is probably to be placed before the second missionary journey, and thus before the foundation of the Galatian churches. He had made known to them the *crucified* Jesus and the "message of *faith*" (3:1, 2); he reminds them that they had "begun in the Spirit," not "in the flesh." In other words, the doctrine of the Epistle to the Galatians is not an outgrowth of, or an advance upon, his preaching in the year 51 or 52, but a re-affirmation and vindication of it.

Again, in writing to the Romans five or six years subsequent to the foundation of the Thessalonian Church, Paul expresses his gratitude to God that the Roman Church had accepted his exposition of the gospel: "But thanks be to God . . . that ye became obedient [the context implies at the time of their conversion] to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered." (Rom. 6:17.) The "form" referred to denotes "the distinct expression which the gospel had received through Paul"; see Meyer, De Wette, Philippi, Godet. It is the "form" of that gospel whose free individualism and high spirituality he is engaged in expounding in chapters six to eight of the Epistle. Now these Romans are not addressed as recent converts; if the faith of this large and widely known Christian community was known to be of this type, it certainly was not in consequence of some recent change. It is only reasonable to infer that this had been the Christianity taught at Rome for at least several years.

Not to pursue this inquiry farther, we assume that the Thessalonian Church had already been taught the essential principles of what Paul called *his* gospel—taught, that is to say, as fully as his brief sojourn, and the limited capacities of his converts, permitted. He had to them, as to the Corinthians, preached Christ crucified, as their righteousness, their sanctification, and their final redemption. Compare 1 Cor. 1:30. That which is *expounded* in Romans as the central truth of the Christian system, is in First and Second Thessalonians *implied* as its central truth—namely, the vital union of the believer with Christ, a union already established and to be perfected in eternity.

Of the history of the church subsequent to these epistles, the New Testament furnishes little or no trace. The probability that he visited it on various occasions, both before and after the Roman imprisonment, has already been referred to. Several of its

members became active participants in the apostolic missionary work. Jason is not afterward mentioned, unless he be supposed to be identical with the apostle's kinsman who sends salutations from Corinth to the Roman Church. (Rom. 16:21.) Gaius and Secundus were assistants of Paul in his third missionary journey. Aristarchus also, who accompanied Paul on the same journey, has honorable mention. He and Gaius fell into the hands of the mob that gathered in the great theatre at Ephesus. In Colossians 4:10, he is named by the apostle as his "fellow prisoner," having become, it would seem, a voluntary sharer of Paul's exile and captivity.

### III. OCCASION AND OBJECT.

The letter itself explains the immediate *occasion*. After his departure from Thessalonica, the welfare of the newly formed church had been constantly on the apostle's heart. He made two attempts to return—each in vain; "Satan hindered" him. (2:18.) From Athens he sends Timothy back to comfort them, establish them more firmly in the faith, and bring report of their state. He himself soon goes from Athens to Corinth, and there awaits the return of Timothy from Thessalonica, and of Silas from Berea, or some other of the Macedonian churches. The interval was one of those periods of "distress and affliction" (3:7) which seem often to have characterized the experience of the apostle, particularly during these more active and laborious years of his missionary career; similar, perhaps, to a subsequent experience in Macedonia, of which he speaks in 2 Cor. 7:5: "For even when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus." While he is in this state of depression, Timothy arrives, bringing relief and joy. He is the bearer of good news from the Thessalonians—of their faith and love, of their affection for Paul, and of their steadfastness in persecution. This was comfort indeed; "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." The "even now" of 3:6 shows that this was the *occasion* on which the letter was written, immediately after Timothy's arrival. He obeys the impulse, seizes the hour of his own revived hope and courage, and, sending back cheer and uplifting to the hearts whence it had come to himself, writes this inspiring exhortation.

The writer's *object* is equally manifest. He writes for the same reason that he had sent Timothy before, for the same reason that he would now have come himself—he is with them "in heart," and can "no longer forbear" (2:17, seq.); he desires "to comfort them concerning their faith," "to establish" them, "to perfect that which was lacking in their faith." (3:2, 10.)

The effect, when read in the church at Thessalonica, can easily be imagined. Paul's generous praise and recognition of their fidelity; the winning unreserve with which he takes them into his confidence; his ardent affection to them personally; and his inspiring tone of courage and hope—all this, as well as the closing words of instruction and kindly admonition, would enkindle the like ardor and zeal, and arouse the enthusiasm of the little community to the highest. The natural tendency of expositors to lay stress on the didactic element has thrown the personal and historical substance of the Epistle into the background, and the reader is liable to pass rapidly over the early chapters as if they were merely introductory to the writer's main theme. The Epistle is classified as "eschatological," and the fourth and fifth chapters are regarded as the body of it. "The main object of the apostle in writing this Epistle," says Bishop Ellicott, "can easily be gathered

from some of the leading expressions; it was designed alike to console and to admonish," etc.; see the whole paragraph in the Introduction at the beginning of his excellent grammatical commentary on the Greek text. Dr. Schaff summarizes the Epistle thus: "The theoretical theme: The Parousia of Christ. The practical theme: Christian Hope in the Midst of Persecution"<sup>1</sup> But neither the didactic nor the admonitory motive furnishes the key to the letter. The instruction given concerning the Parousia is principally a reminder, in order to remove misapprehension concerning instruction previously given. The ethical precepts are, for the most part, repetitions of his previous oral exhortations. Both these hortatory portions, moreover, belong to the closing section of the letter, introduced by "Finally"; this conjunction, as Ellicott properly says, "marks the transition to the close" of the Epistle; it indicates that he had now written what it was his principal object to say. An ethical motive, indeed, pervades the entire letter; but it is partly unconscious, and finds expression in but few direct precepts. It aims higher. A letter will be Paul's other self, and do, in part, what he wished to do in person: promote mutual knowledge and confidence between himself and the church, develop the self-consciousness of the church as a body, and animate it with his own holy ambition.

#### IV. GENERAL CHARACTER AND CONTENTS.

1. *We are to remember, first of all, that it is a letter—a genuine letter in motive and substance, as well as in form.* "All the writings of Paul which have come down to us," says Reuss, "are not only in the epistolary form, but are actual letters addressed to particular and definite readers." Some of them, however, are of a more general character than others. The Epistles to the Romans and Colossians were addressed to churches that he had never visited. The Epistle to the Ephesians is supposed to have been intended, not for that church exclusively, but for a circle of churches in that region. Both the Epistles to the Thessalonians have the best characteristics of the epistolary style. The true letter is personal, spontaneous, vivid. It is born of the moment; it is the flash of intelligence and feeling from soul to soul, as in an instant of electric contact. Letters are the most personal of all writings; their form and texture allow the fullest revelation of individual traits. They often of themselves constitute a biography, as in the case of Cicero or of Carlyle. This significance depends not only on the facts or truths of which they are the vehicle, but on the weight and worth of the writer's individuality.

Such are Paul's letters to the Thessalonian Church. So much is it the custom to read them by chapters, or to resolve them into "lessons," or to study them in single "texts," so seldom is one of them read at a single sitting as one piece of writing, that this prime characteristic needs the utmost emphasis. This First Epistle is anything but "an open letter"—a public tract in epistolary form, as, for instance, the once famous Junius Letters, or Pascal's Provincial Letters, nominally addressed to definite persons, but really intended for a wider and quite different public. It is not a doctrinal treatise, though often so treated, and labeled, accordingly, "Eschatological," a title which lends its aid toward rendering both of these two Epistles the least read of the Pauline writings.

"In the study of the Scripture," says Bengel, "the reader ought to put himself, as it were, in the *time* and *place* where the words were spoken or the thing was done, and to consider the feelings of the writer and the force of the words." Once back to the time and place, and he has gained for himself the interpreter's true standing point and centre

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Christian Church," I., page 757.

of vision, and has more than half accomplished the interpreter's task. The field of vision, however, in the case of a real letter, like an ellipse, has *two* centres, two times and places—that of its writer and that of the persons addressed. So he who will for himself "feel the force of the words," must take his place, first, with Paul in Corinth, and then in the assembled Thessalonian Church when the letter is read.

2. *It is a page of Paul's experience while in Corinth.* We have already seen how erroneous it is to regard it as marking a stage in his theological development, or as furnishing a transcript of his theology at a given epoch. It is a transcript of himself. It is a spontaneous letter, struck off at an hour when, to use his own expression on another occasion to the Corinthians, "his heart was enlarged," and his soul flowed forth like a river in conscious joy and strength. No one of his epistles abounds in warmer expressions of affection. The first three chapters glow with a father's love; nay, the apostle boldly likens his own love to these children of his soul to a mother's yearning tenderness as she presses her babe to her bosom. It is an hour, also, of fresh assurance and courage. The contempt shown him at Athens, the disheartening prospect in Corinth, were for a moment forgotten. His paralyzing depression has vanished, and his soul is alive again (3:8); he is on heights of glory and joy. (2:20.) The contrast is touching, between his downcast mood just before and the rebound after Timothy's arrival. Even at the distance of eighteen centuries one can scarcely view without tears the overflowing, grateful joy of the heroic apostle, as he receives the messages from his converts in Thessalonica. A man of many enemies, "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake"—

"Bruised of his brethren, wounded from within"—

so much the stronger was the tie that bound him to the souls he had won for Christ. We see, from such a letter, not only how he himself could love, but how he prized and hungered for the love that others gave.

3. *It contains Paul's own account of his ministry in Thessalonica.* This is found in the first and second chapters—the most interesting, perhaps the most instructive, portion of the Epistle. The reminiscences are the more valuable, considered as autobiography, because they seem not to be written in the way of personal vindication. They are rather to remind the church of its glorious beginning, and to inspire it anew with his own aims and spirit. His history is in part theirs. It rehearses suffering, conflict, toil by day and by night, but a ministry wrought in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in strong conviction—a ministry that had not been found "vain."

4. *It is a picture from life of a newly formed Gentile church in the apostolic age.* In the earnest endeavor of modern thought to realize to itself the true character of primitive Christianity, a document like this is of inestimable value—second, in this respect, only to the Corinthian Epistles. Its testimony is the more valuable from its being a casual production, so slightly dogmatic, and, in its retrospect, so recent. We get glimpses into the interior of a society of Christian believers which has just separated itself from Pagan fellowship, as well as from the synagogue of Jews, and to which the new life is gradually giving form and character. The heaven-born principle of faith working by love has already begun to produce the fruit of righteousness, not only transforming individual life, but organizing its diverse and antagonistic elements till they are already one body in Christ. In truth, it is a spectacle of thrilling interest—this church in the fresh beauty of its first love. It is "*in the Lord Jesus Christ.*" It has evidently, like the Galatian Church, "begun in the Spirit." Each member has received the Holy Spirit (compare

1 : 6 ; 4 : 8); still more, some have received his charismatic gifts, for the church has its prophets. (Compare 5 : 20.) Its ideals of duty are not yet the highest, as regards either the individual or the church. It has its special temptations, as has already been observed. Especially is it suffering the fiery trial of persecution, and tempted to think some strange thing has happened to it. But thus far its escutcheon is unstained by apostasy; it is steadfast in the Lord—a church of faith, of love, above all, of hope. This last—“queen of the virtues,” as Chrysostom calls it—is the jewel that shines brightest in its diadem. It confronts its foes clad in the breastplate of faith and love, and helmeted with hope—the hope ready to be revealed in the last time, the hope of the Saviour’s appearing.

5. *Its doctrinal section (4 : 13-5 : 11) treats of Christ’s second coming.* It forms but a small part of the Epistle (about a sixth), and is chiefly designed to recall instructions previously given. Even here the explicitly doctrinal element is but slight. Some of the church were in distress lest their friends—believers who had recently died—should not arise from the dead in time to share the glories of the Lord’s coming. On this point Paul gives assurance and comfort, declaring in unmistakable terms that the Christian dead should arise *before* the saints who might then be alive should gather to meet the Lord. The other points are scarcely more than re-affirmations of our Lord’s own teaching to his disciples before his crucifixion and his ascension. The “Day of the Lord,” as in Old Testament phraseology he terms the time of Christ’s return, cannot be definitely predicted. It will come suddenly; it will come unexpectedly; it will come with terror to the enemies of God. Although himself evidently under the personal impression that the Parousia was not far off, and would probably come within the lifetime of some then living, he nevertheless refrains from affirming this, or in any way suggesting it as a matter of faith. He shows that the chief significance of the doctrine is its practical significance. It teaches spiritual vigilance and sobriety. The decree of God hath appointed them to salvation; it is theirs to watch and wait until his salvation be revealed.

6. *The fourth and fifth chapters are principally ethical.* There are a number of specific precepts—terse, pointed, and evidently adjusted with accuracy to the immediate needs of the church. Especially characteristic are the injunctions regarding chastity, industry, order, and subordination in church relations, constant joy and unceasing prayer, recognition of the Holy Spirit’s presence and work—the latter particularly in respect to the deliverances of those who had the gift of prophecy. Here occurs the memorable exhortation “to be quiet, to do your own business, and to work with your hand”; and parallel with it, in the Second Epistle, “If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

“Few persons, perhaps, have remarked how significant this style of exhortation is of a new world and a new order of ideas. For, in spite of ultra-democratic appearances, there was in Greek society an ultra-aristocratic spirit in its most evil form—the ultra-aristocracy of culture as well as of social position. As regards the former, tradesmen and mechanics were held to be incapable of true philosophy or spiritual religion or refined thought. As regards the latter, one of the worst influences of slavery was the discredit which it threw upon free labor, and all the smaller forms of commerce. Aristotle treats with cold cynicism everything of the sort. The tradesman or mechanic is but a higher kind of slave,—differing from him in kind, not in degree,—bearing the same relation to

the public which the slave bears to the individual. To do any work which marks or curves the body ; to live upon daily pay ; to be connected with the detail of fabrications, or with sales in the public markets—this was to degrade a freeman, and to *plebeianize* his spirit as well as his body. Such were the ideas of Aristotle, who knew Macedonia so well, and had lived in it so long—such the ideas which were in the very air of Thessalonica when St. Paul wrote his epistles. It is full of significance that the first apostolic epistle speaks out so boldly and earnestly upon the dignity and becomingness of industry, the nobility of working with our own hands, though they may be blackened by the work—the duty of preferring our own coarse bread, won by the sweat of our brow, to the precarious food of the beggar, or the ignominious luxury of the parasite. This was one great social and moral result of the message, which, if its origin was in God's eternal counsels, came from a carpenter's shop, and was published by a company of fishermen, among whom a tent-maker of Tarsus had obtained admission."

But the Epistle, *as a whole*, is ethical. It is the ethical motive that gives tone to the earlier as well as to the later chapters. One *desiré* evidently controls the writer : the desire for the spiritual welfare of his readers, that he may "establish their faith"—in other words, that he may strengthen and develop their Christian character. But he relies less upon precepts and instruction than upon the impact of his own personality. He takes them into his spiritual embrace. He points them to his own example. He will transfuse their souls with his own vitality and enthusiasm. It is evident how perfectly he apprehends the nature of his task as a moral teacher. High attainments in character are possible only through energetic effort ; there must be an arousal of spiritual ambition and enthusiasm. But the effort must be directed to the highest moral ends; clearly conceived ideals are prerequisite to the highest excellency. Thus the apostle sedulously seeks to correct and to perfect their conceptions of the life that is in Christ. It is a fundamental misconception of the scope of the Epistle to regard it as pointing only or chiefly to a Messianic deliverance. It points upward to higher ideals of character, and not merely forward to a final redemption. There is a deliverance from sin to be striven for now, as well as a deliverance from wrath to be attained hereafter. God calls them to be holy here. Much stress, it will be observed, is laid upon sanctification and holiness. God's will and purpose is their sanctification—the work of the Holy Spirit, but not less truly their work. Thus the general drift of the Epistle allies it very closely to that written to the Philippians about ten years later. There are many points of contact between the two. Indeed, the latter is a constant commentary upon the earlier letter, containing, as it does, a richer development of the same ethical ideas. Its keynote, as has often been said, is *hope*. It is thus a message from Christ to the suffering Christian and to the suffering church in all ages. As to his people under the Old Covenant, so here, under the New, he speaks "to her heart" (compare Hosea 2 : 13) words of unspeakable comfort and cheer in the midst of conflict or distress or temptation—to the heart of a man in the tones of a man. And the supreme comfort to his people will ever lie in "the promise of his coming." What has well been said of the Apocalypse applies to each of these epistles. "It calls the Church to fix her eyes more intently upon her true hope. For what is that hope? Is it not the hope of the revelation of her Lord in the glory that belongs to him? No hope springs so eternal in the Christian breast. It was that of the early Church, as she believed that he whom she had loved while he was on earth would return to perfect the happiness of his redeemed. It ought not to be less our hope now. 'Watching for it, waiting for it, being patient unto it, groaning without it, looking for it, hastening unto it'—

these are the phrases which the Scripture uses concerning the day of God. And surely it may well use them, for what, in comparison with the prospect of such a day, is every other anticipation of the future?"<sup>1</sup>

7. *Analysis.* It readily divides into two portions: chapters 1-3, Personal and Retrospective; chapters 4, 5, Hortatory and Didactic. Topically, it may be divided as follows:

1 : 1, Address and Salutation.

1 : 2-10, Grateful recollection of their steadfast hope.

2 : 1-16, Review of his ministry in Thessalonica.

2 : 17-3 : 13, Assurance of affection, desire to visit them, Timothy's mission, prayer in their behalf.

4 : 1-12, Exhortations to chastity and love.

4 : 13-5 : 11, The Parousia.

5 : 12-28, Closing exhortations, and Benediction.

---

<sup>1</sup> Milligan, "Revelation of St. John," page 191.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

## CHAPTER I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

### Ch. 1 : 1. Address and Salutation.

**1. Paul.** It was Greek and Roman usage for the writer of a letter to put his name at the beginning, instead of, as is our custom, at the close. Next came the name of the person addressed, then the salutation. Thirteen of the epistles of the New Testament begin with 'Paul.' The title prefixed in our printed editions formed, of course, no part of the original document; the opening sentence of each letter formed its only title.

**Silvanus and Timotheus.** The 'Silvanus' of this letter is the Silas of Acts 15 : 22, and other subsequent passages in that book. He was one of the three whose arrival at Thessalonica with the gospel message Luke has recorded in Acts 17. His part in New Testament history is known to us chiefly in connection with the council at Jerusalem, and the second missionary journey of Paul. A Hellenistic Jew, it would seem, from his name, and as appears from Acts 16 : 37, a Roman citizen. He was a prophet, and one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church.

Timothy was Paul's own "son," in the faith, converted at Lystra, his native place, about seven years previous to the writing of this letter. From the time of his ordination until the close of the period embraced in the book of Acts, he appears to have been the almost constant companion of the apostle. Various interesting glimpses of his person appear in the two letters addressed to him by Paul. They are associated by Paul in his salutation, but not as joint authors of the letter. The apostle writes independently, as will be seen from 2 : 18, and the opening of chapter 3. Compare also 2 Thess. 2 : 5 and 3 : 17.

**Unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** The word rendered 'church' (*ἐκκλησία*) did not of itself, at this period, denote a Christian body. It was simply equivalent to "assembly" or "congregation."

This "congregation of Thessalonians" (no article in the original before the name Thessalonians) is therefore described as being '*in God*'—'*in Christ*.' The latter qualifying phrase would particularly distinguish them from the synagogue, or any other association of Jews, that was to be found in Thessalonica. But the Pagans also had their assemblies and associations, religious, political, and social. One or another of these various societies, guilds, or fraternities might also be designated in the same Greek word; the phraseology of this address individualizes the Thessalonian Church as distinct from all these. Both the Christian Church, and its members individually, are declared by the Scriptures to be *in Christ*. Compare 2 : 14; 4 : 16. The phrase is especially frequent in Paul's later epistles. They are in spiritual organic union with Christ, as set forth by Christ himself in his parable of the vine and the branches, in the fifteenth chapter of John.

**Grace be unto you, and peace.** We have here the apostolic epistolary salutation in the earliest and simplest form found in the New Testament. The Epistle of James, though written earlier than this, simply employs the usual Greek greeting. Paul's epistles all open with the salutation above, or an expanded form of the same. It seems indeed to have been the inspired coinage of the apostle himself, suggested, it may well have been, by the Aaronic benediction that he had been wont from childhood to hear from priestly lips, in temple and synagogue. We are scarcely warranted, however, in considering it a *modification* of the former, as Otto and others have argued. The Roman, in writing, wished his reader *health* (*satus*); the Greek uttered as his best wish—*joy* (*χαίρεω—to rejoice*); the Hebrew, *peace* (*שָׁלוֹם*), meaning prosperity, well-being. The Pauline salutation is conceived from a point of view distinctively Christian. Beautiful in form, it is peculiarly

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;  
 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith,

full and rich in meaning: "May God's grace flow in upon you, and may his peace be in you!" 'Grace' is God's redeeming love—the divine favor as manifested toward sinful man in and through Christ. 'Peace' is the beatific effect of that grace in the soul of the believer—the inward harmony, the peaceful well-being, produced by the Spirit of grace. As compared with the greeting that was current in his day—the greeting ordinarily prefixed to letters, Paul's salutation is expanded in form; is of larger, richer import; and is substantially a prayer, not a mere wish. The remainder of the verse, as found in the Common Version, **From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ**, formed, it is probable, no part of the original text, though forming a part of the salutation in Rom. 1:7, and elsewhere. But the salutation itself turns the thought of its readers at once to him who is alike "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10) and "the God of peace." (Rom. 15:33.) As in the beginning, so also at the close of the Epistle, the writer invokes grace upon the church. See note there.

**2-10. Grateful Recollection of the Steadfast Hope in Christ which has characterized this Church.**—We thank God for your faith, your love, and especially for your *hope*, assured as we are of your divine election to eternal life. Your joy amid affliction, and your faith toward God have already made your life eloquent for Christ throughout both the provinces of Greece and in other lands. You are known as men who are awaiting our Lord Jesus Christ's return from heaven.

**2. We give thanks to God always for you all.** 'We,' obviously the persons named in the salutation, Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus. Paul is the writer of the letter, but here and several times afterward speaks in the name of his two companions. Many expositors, Chrysostom, Conybeare, and others, understand the plural to refer only to Paul himself. But it is not his style to use the plural in designating himself; the use of the literary 'we' was rarer among ancient writers than modern. The only instances (at least, that seem clearly to be such) in which Paul uses

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love

this plural are in 2:18, and 3:1 of the present Epistle, and each of these is sufficiently explained from the context. Here it would be quite arbitrary to disconnect this verb from the authors of the immediately preceding joint salutation. **For you all.** Paul's thanksgiving, in the case of this church, embraces its whole membership. There is no indication in the letter that there were any known to him who would have to be excepted. The few months that had elapsed since the apostle's departure had witnessed no feuds in the church, no lapses from the faith on the part of its members. A church in the bright beauty of its first love! See Introduction, pages 15, 16. **Making mention of you in our prayers.** This clause is not a mere repetition, nor is it a needless addition. Their gratitude found articulate expression in their prayers. The words suggest a practical lesson. We ought not only to feel, but to give utterance to our gratitude toward God, and to our affectionate remembrance of our brethren. "Prayer without words" will have little substance or vitality. The only method of prayer recognized by some modern novelists is "silent aspiration," apparently little else than a vague emotional fervor. This will not meet the necessities of a Christian's experience, and does not answer to the Scriptural conception of prayer. Paul assures the Thessalonian Church that it is constantly and individually mentioned in his prayers.

**3. Remembering without ceasing**—or, *for we call to mind without ceasing*. Thus he explains how natural and spontaneous is his prayer. It springs of necessity, as it were, from his affectionate remembrance. The word 'remembering' is often taken as equivalent to "making mention," as if it were but another designation of the prayer itself. See Alford, Lüemann. But it means simply "remembering," or "calling to mind." See Grimm, Thayer's "Greek and English Lexicon, of the New Testament," Ellieott, and others. **Your work of faith**, etc. In each of these three phrases the second term is the leading one; it is their 'faith,' 'love,' 'hope' that are prominent in the apostle's thought. They designate the principles in which the work, labor,

and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only,

and <sup>1</sup> patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> before <sup>2</sup> our God and Father; knowing, brethren <sup>5</sup> loved of God, your election, <sup>3</sup> how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power,

<sup>1</sup> Or, stedfastness.....<sup>2</sup> Or, God and our Father.....<sup>3</sup> Or, because our gospel, etc.

patience originate. 'Your work of faith' is the working, the activity of your faith—that moral conduct in which your faith finds expression. It is the work that faith does. Not then as Mason: "Almost equivalent to a very emphatic adjective—that is, faithful activity." Compare 1 Tim. 6:12. "The good fight of faith." See also Cremer, "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek," third edition, page 258. **Labour of love**—"the labor which love undergoes, a love that avoids no sacrifices and shuns no toils for the good of others. Such as their own Jason had shown amid persecutions, in Acts 17." (Jowett.) **Patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.** Better, "the stedfastness of your hope" (as recommended by the American Revisers), or "constancy." This noble word (*ὑπομονή*) is frequent with Paul. It is fortitude in suffering, endurance in toil or trial; "the queen of the virtues," Chrysostom calls it. "Patience is the last and highest," says Auberlen; "rightly to suffer is more and harder than rightly to work." The persecutions to which the Thessalonians had been and were still exposed gave large room for the exercise of steadfastness.

Faith, love, *hope*; this shining grace is here made last and prominent. Compare 1 Cor. 13:13. It is the keynote of these two epistles to the Thessalonians. In this verse it is specified as the hope "of our Lord Jesus Christ"—that is, as afterward explained in verse 10, the hope of Christ's return. Nowhere in Paul's letters is hope made so prominent a characteristic of the Christian life as in this. Naturally, for it was only a few months before that these Greeks had been "without hope." Having no hope is a distinguishing term applied by Paul to the heathen. See Eph. 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:13. God as manifest in Christ became to them pre-eminently a "God of hope." (Rom. 15:13.) On the other hand, we are told that to the Jews the gospel came bringing in "a better hope." (Heb. 7:19.) **In the sight of God and our Father.** Most expositors connect these words with the beginning of the verse, "remembering without ceasing." Those who un-

derstand "remembering" to mean "making mention" (see note above), would naturally adopt this interpretation; others, also, as Ellicott, prefer it. But from the position of the words it seems more natural to connect them with the immediately preceding phrases: 'Your work of faith,' etc. These manifestations of the Christian life of the Thessalonians are thus viewed in their immediate relation to God; God is made a witness of their conduct. Compare 3:13; Rom. 4:17; 14:22. The passage is thus understood by Chrysostom, Theodore, Theophylact; among the moderns by Auberlen, Jowett, and others. If this be the correct explanation, the comma just preceding the words should be omitted.

**4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.** The apostle continues to amplify the main thought; his gratitude and unceasing remembrance spring from his assured confidence in their election, from his confidence that they have been chosen to eternal life by the electing grace of God. This is the chief ground and theme of his gratitude. So also in 2 Thess. 2:13. The word rendered "election" (*ἐκλογή*) occurs only seven times in the New Testament (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 2 Peter 1:10); the adjective and verb are more frequent. It properly denotes a choosing or selecting of some from among others not thus selected. The noun here is transitive, the 'your' (Greek, *of you*) containing the object. The Scriptural significance and implications of the word are given more fully in Rom. 9:11-15; compare also Eph. 1:4 with 2 Peter 1:10. The present passage plainly *assumes* a doctrine of election, but says nothing of the extent or objects of electing grace in general, nor how it is conditioned. Paul himself is called by our Lord "a chosen vessel"—literally, "a vessel of election."

**5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only.** 'For,' the rendering of the Common Version, is retained as every way preferable. See the Revisers' margin, where it is "because." Paul states the reasons on which his conviction of their divine election chiefly rests; first, "because he and his com-

but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

and in the Holy Spirit, and in much <sup>1</sup>assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we shewed

1 Or, fulness.

companions were enabled to preach the gospel among them with such power, and secondly (as in verse 6), because they received it with such joy." (Ellicott.) Bengel, Hofmann, Vaughan, and others, with Luther's translation, and the text of the Revision, as above, make the clause *objective*, introduced by "how that" or "that"; it would thus explain the *nature* or the *result* of the "election." But in favor of the construction given above ('for' or "because") are the great majority of expositors and versions, including among the former De Wette, Olshausen, Ellicott, Alford, Pelt, Lünemann, Auberlen, Rigganbach, Eadie. "Our gospel"—the gospel that we preach, our preaching of the gospel. **Not in word only, but also in power.** Compare 1 Cor. 4:20: "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"; also, Rom. 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation," etc. Here is particularly meant the *spiritual might and energy with which the gospel was preached*, namely, the power manifested in the preachers themselves; not the effect upon the Thessalonians, as Jowett. The following words explain the nature of this power more definitely. **In the Holy Ghost (Spirit) and in much assurance**—they preached with conscious power, and the *Holy Spirit* was with them, and they experienced an overwhelming *conviction of the truth* of their message. This conviction of its truth on their part added to the momentum with which it penetrated the hearts of their hearers. The word translated "assurance" Cremer defines "perfect certitude," "full conviction." Compare Col. 2:2; Heb. 10:22. **As ye know**—appealing directly to their own recollection; it was only a few months before. **What manner of men we were among you**—literally, *how we became, or, we were, toward you*. "He says not: *how we preached; but how we were; the whole man preached.*" (Auberlen.) The circumstances were such as to test their quality to the utmost, as Paul shows in the opening of the next chapter. How he and their companions bore themselves, we shall there see more fully. "Among you." The Revisers have "toward

you,"<sup>2</sup> preferring with Westcott and Hort, and the uncials ~~N~~AC, as well as the early Latin f, to omit the preposition (*ἐν*) before the dative of the pronoun which is given in the Textus Receptus and most editions. But a glance at the Greek text shows how easily the omission of the preposition would take place from its being identical with the termination of the preceding word. In favor of the retention of the preposition (and the translation in Common Version) are Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Ellicott, Lünemann, Eadie, and most others. **For your sake**—as set forth in the next chapter, that he might gain them for Christ.

The above verses (2-5) express Paul's thanksgiving. All of his letters to churches open with a similar expression, except that to the Galatians. It would be instructive to compare this first one with those which followed. These thanksgivings retain the same general form, but they are by no means mere rhetorical commonplaces. Each is genuine, fitted to the occasion, called forth by an actual state of things. In the letter to the Romans, for instance, he refers only to what he had heard from others; in the first to the Corinthians, to that church of brilliant gifts, there is no special mention of their mutual love. This letter to the Thessalonian Church opens most nearly like that to the Philippians, written about ten years later.

Bunyan's experience in preaching furnishes an interesting parallel to that of Paul above referred to: "For I have been in my preaching especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine of life by Christ without works, as if an angel of God had stood by at my back to encourage me. Oh, it hath been with such power and heavenly evidence upon my own soul, while I have been laboring to unfold it, to demonstrate it and to fasten it upon the consciences of others, that I could not be contented with saying, 'I believe and am sure'; methought I was more than sure, if it be lawful so to express myself, that those things which I then asserted were true." ("Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.")

**6-10.** The apostle's thought passes insensibly from the expression of thanks to a fuller

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

6 ourselves toward you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy

statement of the power of the gospel as shown in the conversion of his readers:

You made us your model of life, even as we Christ; you were enabled by the Holy Spirit to rejoice while environed by persecution; thus your church has become an example throughout Greece, and wherever the gospel has gone; men carry the news far and wide that you have renounced idolatry, that you have become the obedient worshipers of a real and living God, and are now expecting the return from the skies of his son Jesus.

**6. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.** Logically, this verse stands in close connection with the preceding, and states the second of the reasons introduced by 'for.' Not only had the gospel been *preached* powerfully, but it had *wrought* powerfully. **Followers.** In the Revised Version—*imitators*. Paul taught his converts that they were to be imitators of him as *he was of Christ*. (1 Cor. 11:1.) To the Philippians he writes (4:9): "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do." In 2 Thess. 3:9, he declares that he adopted the course of action described *in order* "to make ourselves an ensample unto you that ye should imitate us." The Christian teacher is bound to lay down a similar precept, and to live so that he can. "God was imitated by Christ (John 5:19, seq.); Christ by Paul and the apostles (1 Cor. 11:1); Paul by the Thessalonians and all who so walked (Phil. 3:17), and then these *imitators* themselves became a *pattern* for others."

"As we commence the missionary work amongst a heathen people, not by translating the Bible into their language, but by sending messengers to them (it is not without reason that 'go,' *πορευέσθε*, occurs in the missionary charge, Matt. 28:19); so, in general, to the word of the Spirit, even the preached, audible word, must still be added the visible stamp of the Spirit in living personalities, who show by act the power and glory of the gospel, and in whom can be seen, if the expression is allowed, the holy arts of the spiritual walk—the spiritual dietetics. On this rests the high importance of good biographies, and yet more of the living observation of Christian characters.

What Christian owes not his best thanks to such life-impressions? For, indeed, humanity is so organized, and this is its noble distinction, that what is deepest rests ever on the relation of person to person; the relation of father and child, of master and disciples penetrates everywhere." (Lange.) **Of the Lord.** The order of the sentence in the original shows that these words form a sort of appended explanation, as if to obviate any misunderstanding. In what respect, particularly, had the Thessalonians been imitators of the apostles and of Christ? The next clause answers: In their joyful endurance of affliction; in that they had received the gospel, though in the midst of fierce persecution, with the joy of the Holy Spirit. **In much affliction.** "The affliction of the Thessalonians dated back as early as their first reception of the gospel. (See Introduction, page 10; Acts 17:6.) And as this Epistle incidentally shows, continued both while the apostle was with them (ch. 2:14), and after he had left them. (ch. 3:2, 3.)" (Ellicott.) This church, as well as that at Philippi, seems to have been plunged at once into the flames of persecution. To enter into the spirit of this letter (and the same is true of that to the Philippians), one must obtain for himself some glimpse of the life which a convert to Christianity would be compelled to lead. From Acts we learn of the sufferings of the first preachers of the gospel, and it is manifest that the disciple was as the master in this respect also. See Pressensé's "Early Years of Christianity"; the volume on "Martyrs and Apostologists," pp. 69-76, for a description of the difficulties and dangers to which the hated and suspected disciples of Christ were exposed in a city of the Roman Empire. **With joy of the Holy Ghost**—that is, the joy produced in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It is called "joy in the Holy Ghost" in Rom. 14:17, and in Gal. 5:22, joy is reckoned as "the fruit of the Spirit." "As a counterpoise to the world's intimidation and vexation, the Holy Ghost works this inward joy at the prospect of an everlasting communion with God." (Auberlen.) Hence the constancy of their hope, of which verse 3 speaks. "Sad but strong," was the motto of the old Italian Colonna family.

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

“Joyful and strong” is the ideal temper for the Christian.

**7. So that ye were (became) ensamples.** According to the preferable reading the word is singular, and thus properly signifies the example set by the Church as one body, the natural and beautiful order of things in the development of the organic Christian life. Those who had imitated the apostles became at once examples for the imitation of others. **Macedonia and Achaia** were at this period the names of the two Roman provinces into which the major portion of ancient Greece was divided. “In the division of the provinces, made by Augustus, the whole of Greece was divided into the provinces of Achaia, Macedonia, and Epirus, the latter of which formed part of Illyris.” [Equivalent to the “Illyricum” of Rom. 15: 19.] (Smith’s “Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography.” Article, “Achaia.”) Athens and Corinth were both in Achaia. The province of Achaia included the Peloponnesus together with a considerable portion of the adjacent territory and the neighboring islands—most, indeed, of ancient Hellas proper. The principal towns and districts of the rest of Greece were included under the name Macedonia. So far as known to us from Acts, the only churches at this time in Macedonia were those founded by the apostle at Philippi and Berea; the only ones in Achaia were those at Athens and Corinth. But when the next Epistle was written (see 2 Thess. 1: 4) it is not unlikely that churches had been established in the towns adjacent to Corinth; the church at Cenchrea is mentioned in the letter to the Romans. (16: 1.) Observe that this example was to all that believe. Christians need to set a good example to one another, as well as to unbelievers. It has been well said that “it requires higher grace and is a more important duty to be an example to believers than to the world.” “Believers” is the name principally given to Christians in these two Epistles, and, indeed, in Paul’s writings generally.

**8. For from you hath sounded out, etc.** ‘From you’—that is, from among you. The

7 Spirit; so that ye became an ensample to all that 8 believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need

Greek word here (*ἔφηκεν*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its cognate noun is our word *echo*. It strikingly describes the report that spread far and wide from Thessalonica—a ringing blast as of a trumpet. And observe, the story of what had taken place among the Thessalonians, not only prepared the way for the gospel: it *was* the gospel; hath sounded out the word of the Lord. On this phrase, ‘the word of the Lord,’ see note on 2 Thess. 3: 1. The thought of the sentence is perfectly clear, notwithstanding a slight irregularity in its logical form, occasioning a difference of punctuation in editions. Two separate thoughts, as frequently in Paul’s writings, are imperfectly blended into one. His thought is: “For the word of the Lord hath sounded forth from you into Macedonia and Achaia; and not only in these provinces, but abroad into every other region your faith toward God is gone forth.” Lünemann has an elaborate discussion of the logical connection. **In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.** In every place where there are Christians or Christian churches, as the context implies; thus, in fact, in every quarter of the Roman world. It is not implied that the apostle had been out of Greece to know whereof he affirms. “Ewald and others call attention to the fact that precisely in Corinth where Paul wrote our Epistle, with trade converging there from all quarters of the Roman world, was it possible for him to give such assurance. . . . The words also indicate an intercourse of the liveliest kind among the Christians.” (Auberlen.) Your faith to God-ward—faith “toward.” The preposition (*πρός*) indicates the direction of their faith, and accords with the description in the following verse of their turning away from idols toward God. In New Testament phraseology we also find faith upon (*ἐπί*) God spoken of in Heb. 6: 1; Rom. 4: 5, 24; more frequently faith in God or Christ (Greek, *ἐν* or *εἰς*). **So that we need not to speak anything.** How satisfactory the condition of that church of which the pastor need not say anything, either to defend or to praise it! Its own life is trumpet-tongued.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even Jesus*, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

9 not to speak anything. For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, 10 to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even Jesus*, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

**9. For they themselves shew of (report concerning) us.** ‘They themselves’—that is, in Macedonia and Achaia and elsewhere, without its being necessary for us to speak of it; ‘concerning us’—that is, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy. So Ellicott and Alford; the view of Lünemann and Auberlen is far less probable, that it includes the Thessalonians also, so as to embrace the topic of the whole remaining sentence. **What manner of entering in**—that is, how we lived and preached among you, as described in verse 5 above, and to be described more fully in the following chapter; with what energy and spiritual might we preached to you. **And how ye turned**, etc. Reporting not merely the fact, but ‘how’; they describe what has been going on among you. Repentance and conversion are often described in Scripture as a *turning to God, or, to the Lord*. See Acts 15:19 and 11:21; compare also Acts 26:17, 18. “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light,” etc. Their turning was ‘from idols,’ image-deities—deities only in form or representation. At Lystra, Paul exhorted his hearers “to turn from these vain things”—that is, false deities, such as Jupiter and Mercury, unto the living God. See Acts 14:15. To the Galatians he writes: “Not knowing God ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods.” See Gal. 4:8. Paul is evidently addressing Gentile converts. The subsequent tenor of the Epistle confirms the view that the Thessalonian Church was mostly composed of converts from Paganism, and to the same effect is the account in Acts of the origin of the church. Compare Introduction, page 8. **To serve the (a) living and true God.** Their idol deities were as deities simply non-existent, without life, without reality. The God to whom they had now turned was *living*, was *real*. “And this is life eternal that they should know thee, the only true God,” etc. (John 17:3.) The word rendered “true” (*ἀληθεύος*) means *real, genuine*, as opposed to that which is pretended,

which has no real objective existence. ‘Living’ and ‘true’ are especially frequent in the Old Testament, as applied to God; the Old Dispensation was chiefly a revelation of the one true God, as over against all the false deities of Paganism. ‘True,’ in the sense of *truthful*, is also applied to God in John 3:33, and elsewhere.

Paul specifies two characteristics of the new religious life which the Thessalonians have entered upon, and by which they are distinguished from their fellows: First, they have become servants of the one true God made known to them in the gospel; second, they are waiting for the return of Jesus Christ.

**10. And to wait for his Son from heaven**

—the prediction of Christ’s return was an integral part of the gospel message as delivered by the apostles. “I will come again and will receive you unto myself” (John 14:3); he “shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.” (Heb. 9:28.) This was the constant posture of the little band of believers—waiting for Christ, looking for the day of the Lord.

“They each from each took courage, and with prayer Made ready for the coming of a king.”

His personal, visible coming was a daily hope and expectation. “Till he come”—how often must this primitive echo of our Lord’s own words have been upon their lips! “I wait for the Lord, and in his word do I hope.” (Ps. 130:5.) Into these words of the Psalmist Christ’s promise had put a new meaning, and fortified the hearts of his people with a fresh and living hope. Paul had evidently laid special stress upon this prophetic element in the gospel during his teaching in Thessalonica—the more, perhaps, because of persecution and other environing spiritual perils to the church. It is plain that they on their part interpreted too literally the promise of a speedy Advent; in the light of subsequent history we have the means of understanding the prediction somewhat better, and have less reason to subject ourselves to the bondage of literalism in the

interpretation of Biblical prophecy. Even the apostles evidently looked for the final consummation of the kingdom in their own time, though they did not announce or teach it. But however mistakenly these early believers in Thessalonica (as so many since) may have fixed the date of fulfillment, none the less was the promise a sure and valid hope, transfusing their souls through the agency of the Spirit with motives and energies that Pagan life never knew. **Jesus which delivereded us**—rather, *who delivereth us*; the participle has its general, substantive force, and thus is not merely past in its reference, nor present “is delivering,” but future also. The following words show that the deliverance here prominent in the mind of the writer was the future and final deliverance in “the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” See the same participle in Rom. 11:26, cited from Isa. 59:20. Vaughan remarks: “The three phrases are equally Scriptural (1) Christ saved, (2) Christ saves, (3) Christ will save.” In illustration of the first he cites Rom. 8:24; Eph. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:9; of the second, 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; of the third, Matt. 24:13; Mark 13:13; Phil. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5. The word ‘delivereth’ (*φέρειν*) as distinguished from other terms applied to Christ’s work, *save*, *ransom*, or *redeem*, and others, describes it more graphically as an act of *rescue*, by an exertion of power. It is the same word in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:13), “Deliver us from evil,” or “the evil one.” **From the wrath to come**—“to come,” like ‘delivereth,’ is a participle in the Greek, but the English rendering gives its proper force. The Speaker’s Commentary errs when it says, that there is “no tinge of the future” in the Greek participle here—that it “answers to the permanent government of God by punishments.” On the contrary, the future is its natural and most frequent use. There is a wrath future, as well as a wrath present, against sin, and the context here requires the former reference. In the first chapter of the next epistle Paul refers to this outbreak of wrath as the antithesis to the believer’s reward. Over against the believer’s hope the Scriptures set the unbeliever’s foreboding—“a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.” (Heb. 10:27, Rev. Ver.)

**Ch. 2:1-16. REVIEW OF HIS MINISTRY IN THESSALONICA.**—Still speaking in the name of his two companions as well as himself:

You know the suffering and outrage we experienced at Philippi; yet we entered upon our work among you with boldness, though met by violent opposition. Our teaching was the truth of God, proclaimed with all honesty and purity of motive, and with a sense of personal responsibility to God only. In our relations with you we were frank and outspoken; we sought neither money nor recognition of our personal authority; it was a labor of love—a mother’s love; for we were ready to give our own souls to you. Hence we labored for our own support so as not to burden you; and, not only by preaching but by example, we sought to lead you into the way of a holy Christian life. As a result, thanks to be God, you received our message as an authentic word of God—which indeed it is; it became a power in you, transforming you into heroic witnesses for the truth, amid persecutions no less severe than have fallen to the lot of your fellow churches in Judea.

The section expands the thought of ver. 5 and 6 in the preceding chapter. In ver. 1-12, which correspond to ver. 5, he shows how signally the advent of the gospel among them had been marked by manifestations of personal power and confidence on the part of the messengers, and the presence in them of the Holy Spirit; in ver. 13-16, which correspond to ver. 6, he repeats with strong feeling their grateful joy in view of the reception their word met with, and its effect upon those who believe. The apostle’s design is not so much vindication (of himself or others), as commemoration. It is a reminiscence adapted to confirm faith, to kindle hope, to quicken and deepen the consciousness of the church. For as a church they have a history, brief (covering perhaps not more than six months) but glorious, and one in which there is manifest the hand of God. The retrospect fills his own soul with joy, and with fresh assurance that an enterprise that had had such a beginning is marked for success. With the same joy and assurance he will inspire his converts. Notable in this First Epistle is the frank setting forth of his aims and methods, which also characterizes the subsequent letters to churches that looked to him as their founder. This earnest, affectionate self-disclosure effectu-

## CHAPTER II.

**F**OR yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you, that it hath not been found vain: but having suffered before, and been shamefully entreated as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much

ally annihilates whatever distance there might be felt to exist between himself and his readers, binds their hearts to himself in closer fellowship, and animates them with his own spirit. Howson's admirable lectures on the *Character of St. Paul* find ample illustration in these verses; especially the two lectures on the apostle's "Tenderness and Sympathy," and his "Conscientiousness and Integrity."

**1. For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you.** "For" introduces an explanatory confirmation of the fact alluded to in ver. 9, and before in ver. 5. Well may they tell the story of our memorable appearance in Thessalonica, bringing the message of the gospel, and in this letter to you we may ourselves be allowed to dwell upon it; for *you yourselves* know it all, and the history is yours too. The frequent appeal to their personal knowledge—"you know" and "*you yourselves know*" (1:5; 2:11)—is natural in a letter written so soon after the events referred to, when all was fresh in the memory of his readers. **That it was not in vain**—or, "void of power"; "vain," applying both to their preaching and to its results; it was not feeble, void of earnestness and energy, nor was it fruitless, unattended with success. This latter is the usual meaning of the Greek word *kevós* (1 Cor. 15:10, 58), and is understood to be included in the use of the word here by DeWette, Pelt, Vaughan, and others. Many, however, understand it as referring only to the manner of their preaching and work, that it was not feeble, destitute of energy; so Ellicott, Alford, Lünenmann, Auberlen. Of some weight against this interpretation is the fact that the verb is perfect (*ye* over having only very rarely an aoristic sense).

**2. But even after that we had suffered before.** The clause is concessive: "Although we had experienced suffering and outrage." At Philippi Paul and Silas (the Silvanus of this Epistle) had been scourged with many blows from the rods of Roman lictors, and then thrown into the inner dungeon, chained in the stocks. In Paul's case his Roman citizenship had added illegality to the outrage.

Straight from these scenes of danger, of physical pain and exhaustion, they seem to have entered upon the work in Thessalonica without any delay. A clear proof that Paul was not the physical weakling described by Farrar. A man constitutionally nervous and of feeble body could scarcely have taken the fatiguing land journey of a hundred miles immediately after an unusually severe Roman scourging, and then proceeded at once to raise the standard of the gospel in a strange city, exposed to new enemies and new persecutions. **We were (waxed) bold in our God.** The verb here rendered 'were bold' or 'waxed bold' in every instance of its occurrence in the New Testament, except Acts 18:26, is used as descriptive of Paul's preaching. The noun from which it is derived denotes "outspoken freedom and boldness of speech"; Demosthenes, akin to Paul in energy, intensity, and moral earnestness, often applies it to his own speeches. 'In our God,' from our living union and fellowship with him; our courage and strength lay not in ourselves, but in God; so to the Philippians: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." **The gospel of God**—that is, of God as the author and sender of the message. See Rom. 1:1, 2; "the gospel of God which he promised afore by his prophets," etc. The gospel is thus designated, ver. 8, 9 below, also Mark 1:14 (Revised Text), 1 Peter 4:17, and in several other passages. See Cremer, p. 32. The *gospel of Christ*, on the other hand (3:2) refers to the subject or theme of the message—that is, the good news of the salvation by Christ. **With much contention, or, conflict.** Here, as in Philippi, they were beset by difficulties and dangers and by fresh foes. His bitterest enemies were the Jews. They met the progress of the gospel with malignant, relentless opposition at every step. Of inward conflict, as in his ministry at Corinth, nothing seems to be said here; compare 2 Cor. 7:5; "without were fightings, *within were fears*."

**3.** The following verses (3-12) are explained by Auberlen as designed to counteract misrepresentations of enemies. But of such a

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile;  
 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust

3 conflict. For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel,

motive there is no trace. It was the presence of opposers *within* the church that called forth such self-vindications as we subsequently find in Galatians and Corinthians. In Thessalonica, fortunately for the young church, its enemies were outside of it. Paul's object, and so it is understood by Calvin and the majority of commentators, in these earnest, affectionate reminiscences addressed to these new, ignorant converts, is rather to interpret to them his own work, and the gospel method generally. **For our exhortation**, etc. "For" in its very common introductory use, when one begins a fuller statement or explanation of some thing that has been said. Many writers omit any such connecting link, but Paul (in this respect a true Greek in his style) usually inserts it. 'Exhortation'—that is, our preaching of the gospel. The original word, both verb and noun (*παρακαλέω* and *παρακλησις*) is one of rich and varied meaning. The noun, meaning a "summons" or "entreaty," is in Paul's vocabulary rather an "animating appeal" or "charge," as of a leader to his followers, a soldier to his comrades. The word itself throws a flood of light on the characteristic features of the apostolic preaching, and especially upon the preaching of the great apostle to the Gentiles, to which the word is oftenest applied in the New Testament. It was eminently discourse with power—power to penetrate the heart with its warning, consolation, and encouragement, to arouse out of indifference, and to overcome the resistance of the will. The word is used for one of the specific "spiritual gifts" mentioned in 1 Cor. 14:3. Barnabas was a "son of exhortation," as his name signified; see Acts 4:36, Revised Version. We should be wrong in supposing, nor is it suggested by this word, that Paul's preaching was deficient in the element of instruction. "Warning every man and teaching every man," he says in Col. 1:28; "by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience." (2 Cor. 4:2.) It was far enough from being mere hortatory, persuasive appeal, such as depended mainly for its effect upon aroused feeling. Instruction was from first to last a prominent feature of his ministry. But in the word by which he here and often describes his

preaching of the gospel we have pictured to us somewhat of the directness, personal force, and spiritually "living" quality (Heb. 4:12) by which in the power of the Holy Paraclete himself he gained men for Christ. **Was not of deceit (error) nor of uncleanness, etc.** Our preaching does not originate in a *delusion* of which we are the victims—it is "the gospel of God"—nor yet in *impure motives*, nor do we use 'deceit' in ensuring its success. We have not surrendered ourselves to delusion, nor are we seeking for selfish ends to ensnare others in delusion. It is a question whether 'uncleanness' here refers to unchaste aims or to impure, unworthy motives generally, especially ambition and covetousness. In that age of sensuality the priestly attachés of many of the Pagan temples not only led corrupt lives, but were well known as the panders to the foulest vice. Such also was the character of many of the wandering magi and sorcerers. "Of these are they that creep into houses and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts." (2 Tim. 3:6.) But it is probable that it is used in the general sense of moral impurity, as in Rom. 6:19, where it is opposed to "righteousness" and "sanctification." It then refers particularly to the ambitious and covetous motives which he so earnestly disclaims in ver. 5, 6, below. So most expositors; see also Cremer, "Biblico-Theological Lexicon," p. 320.

**4. But as we were allowed of God.** Better, as in Revised Version, *But even as we have been approved of God.* 'Allowed' and 'trieth' (in Revised Version, "approve" and "provest") in this verse are the same word in the original. It has, however, two distinctly recognized senses: first "to prove," "test," "examine." So in the latter clause, "provest our hearts," and 5:21, "prove all things." Second, "to approve," after a trial or examination, Phil. 1:10: "that ye may approve the things that are excellent." The word 'allowed,' of the Common Version, in its old English meaning, was synonymous with "approved." The apostle in this verse states two great facts which were ever present and controlling to his consciousness, and which alone almost give us the key to his ministry; first, he had a *divine*

with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor

so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts. For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others,

*commission*; second, he was constantly subject to *divine scrutiny*. On the first point, it is as if the words of the Lord Jesus were ever ringing in his ears: “*he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name*,” etc. “*We are ambassadors for Christ*,” he says. (2 Cor. 5:20.) As such it is a high and holy trust with which he has been charged. We bear the king’s message, a royal word of grace to men. Hence, “*Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*.” In virtue of this trust, I am debtor to all men, but it is “*for Jesus’ sake*”; it is not my business to be **pleasing men**. For—and this is the second great fact—it is **God, which trieth (provethe) our hearts**. I am subject to his scrutiny; his eye is upon my work; it is to him that the final account is to be rendered. “*Let a man so account of us as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God; . . . he that judgeth me is the Lord*.” See 1 Cor. 4:1-4; compare Gal. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:11, seq. Paul exemplifies the spirit of King Richard the Second’s exhortation to his followers, in one of the noblest senses in which it can be applied:

“Ourselves are high,  
High be our thoughts.”

The facts on which he next proceeds to dwell (in the verses immediately following) admirably confirm and illustrate this verse.

5. **For neither at any time used we flattering words.** ‘For,’ used as in ver. 3. We had no ends that we sought to compass by flattery, no covetousness to cloak. ‘Used’ of the Common Version represents the Greek phrase rather better than the “*were we found using*” of the Revision; the verb is not passive in signification. On the former point he had appealed to his readers—as ye know; on this latter point the apostle solemnly calls God to witness. **Nor** (did we use) a **cloak of covetousness**—that is, a *cloak for covetousness*. ‘Cloak’ (Greek, *πρόσθαις*, “*pretext*”) is something put forward to conceal what is behind it. But for the context it might be uncertain whether a show of covetousness was thought of as hiding something worse, or

covetousness itself was the thing to be concealed. Evidently the latter; “*covetousness*” stands in an objective relation to the preceding word. We used no cloak for covetousness; and that for the reason that we had no such aim to conceal. We did not use our preaching to enrich ourselves. In that age, as perhaps in our own age and country, there could be no stronger proof of pure, noble aims. Greed of gain was a besetting sin of the Greeks, an evil trait that had come into offensive prominence after they lost their freedom and came under the Roman dominion. Many of the Greek teachers who came to Rome became known as ambitious, greedy adventurers. The peripatetic Jewish magi, such as the Simon whom Philip met in Samaria, and Elymas whom Paul found with Sergius Paulus, were even more rapacious than the Greeks. In the later years of Paul’s ministry some of the bitterest opposition he experienced came from those who were preaching the gospel with mercenary and selfish motives. Such are referred to in Phil. 1:16; 1:17, in Revised Version; “*but the other proclaim Christ of faction (or more accurately ‘self-seeking,’ Greek *ἐπιθετικός*) not sincerely, thinking to add affliction to my bonds*.” That the apostle calls God himself to witness on this point is an indication of the stress he lays upon it—of the importance he attaches to his being clean from even a suspicion of gain-seeking in his ministry.

6. **Nor of men sought we glory.** See John 5:44, where Christ reminds the Jews that they “*receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not*.” (Revised Version.) The honor, the approval that men bestow was not what we sought; even your approval, with all our love for you, was as nothing compared with that of God who proveth our hearts. (Ver. 4.) To the Corinthians Paul writes in a similar strain: “*But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man’s judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self; . . . he that judgeth me is the Lord*.” (1 Cor. 4:3, 4.) **Nor yet of others**—other men, whether in Thessalonica or elsewhere. **When we might have**

yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishest her children:

when we might have <sup>1</sup>claimed authority, as apostles of Christ. But we were <sup>2</sup>gentle in the midst of you,

1 Or, *been burdensome*. . . . . 2 Most of the ancient authorities read *babes*.

**been burdensome**—or, “though we might have been,” the clause being properly concessive, as the context clearly shows. On the latter part of the clause expositors are by no means agreed—namely, whether the phrase in the original means (1) “to be burdensome,” or (2) “to claim honor” or “authority.” Compare the margin of the Common Version, “used authority,” and of the Revised Version, “claimed honour.” The question is one of Greek lexicography and the discussion of it is not here in place. The latter of the above two interpretations seems to me the true one. “Authority” is preferred by Ellioott, Auberlen, Grimm (“*Clavis Novi Testamenti*”); “honour” by Calvin, De Wette, Lünemann, Alford. “Claimed honour,” given in the margin by the English Revisers, best expresses the manifest antithesis of the sentence, and is strikingly accordant with the writer’s course of thought; I prefer therefore to render: *when we might have claimed honour*; observe particularly the following words, **as the apostles of Christ.** It is, moreover, amply justified by Greek usage. The thought then

is: As Christ’s official messengers we might have claimed deference to our position and dignity; but we did not seek the kind of personal influence that depends on men’s recognition of place or power. Paul’s forbearance to insist on a deference, or acknowledgment of superiority that was really due, illustrates partially his own precept in Phil. 4:5: “Let your moderation (*forbearance*) be known unto all men.” In the word ‘apostles’ Paul includes his two co-laborers in Thessalonica. Silas and Timothy were apostles in the wider sense of the word; so both Paul and Barnabas are termed apostles in Acts 14:4, 14. The term is no proof that Paul in this whole passage, though using the plural, refers to himself only; that he is himself the author of the Epistle appears manifestly as he proceeds, but thus far he speaks for his companions also; see ver. 4, “our hearts,” and ver. 8, “our own souls.”

7, 8. After describing, verses 5 and 6, what they were not, the apostle goes on to set forth what they were, and sought to be, among the Thessalonians. **But we were gentle among you.**<sup>1</sup> Gentleness, forbearance to seek or assert

<sup>1</sup> ηπιοι in the Received Text, also in that of the Revisers, with Alford, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, with Lachmann, read νηπιοι, *babes*; Vulgate, *parvuli*. Both readings are very old. The external testimony is strongly preponderant for νηπιοι: Ι (first hand) B C (first hand) D (first hand) F G and several cursive; the Latin, Memphitic, Ethiopic versions; also the Fathers for the most part, though Clement and Origen render divided witness. For ηπιοι: Ι (third hand) A C (second hand) D (third hand) E K L P and most cursive; both Syriac versions, the Thebaic, followed by the Bashmuric and Armenian. There are thus first-class witnesses for the antiquity of the reading (ηπιοι) “gentle,” though it must be admitted that the weight of external authority is against it. On the other hand, transcriptional probability is perhaps slightly in its favor, since the repetition of a letter is a sufficiently frequent phenomenon when the word thus formed was more familiar to the scribe than the one rejected. The intrinsic evidence, however, comes in with great weight in favor of the latter, and seems practically decisive. “Gentle” is the appropriate antithesis to what has just been disclaimed in the preceding verse, the assertion of his apostolic dignity or authority, while in connection with the following clauses it is immeasurably preferable to “babes”; for the following

words (to the end of verse 8) are so closely adjoined as evidently to be meant for illustration of the term just used. Dr. Hort argues that this “bold image” [babes] is preferable to “the tame and facile adjective” [gentle], and he furnishes an interpretation of the preceding context to answer to it: “It is not of harshness that St. Paul here declares himself innocent, but of flattery and the rhetorical arts by which gain or repute is procured, his adversaries having doubtless put this malicious interpretation upon his language among the Thessalonians.” But this is to sever verse 7 from its immediate predecessor and carry the connection farther back. Besides, while it is quite true that Paul does not disclaim “harshness,” he does disclaim the assertion of his apostolic rank in order to compel deference or obedience, which in other churches he sometimes found it necessary to do; compare 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:10. Again the “bold image” [babes] is not only dissonant in form from that which follows, but expresses an alien thought. To be a babe would have been for the purpose of putting himself on their level in understanding; this gentleness was something else—the compulsion of a mature and powerful love brought to bear upon their wills; so that we cannot at all agree with A Lapide, that either reading comes to the same thing. “Further,” Dr. Hort continues, “the phrase *ἐν μέσῳ νηπών* exactly

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail:

authority, is put in contrast with the self-seeking and self-assertion just disclaimed. Compare 2 Tim. 2:24: "And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle toward all." These are the only two instances of the use of this word (*ἡπτος*) in the New Testament. In the Rhemish translation of the Latin Vulgate: "But we became *children*" (instead of *gentle*) etc.; and so in many texts and versions. But this reading mars the beauty of the comparison, and can only be accepted on overwhelming evidence. One can hardly agree with A Lapide, that both readings really come to the same thing. See critical note. **Even as a nurse cherisheth her children.** It is not easy to decide whether this clause is to be joined immediately to the preceding or the following. By the Common and the Revised Versions, and by Lillie, it is punctuated as belonging to the preceding. But most commentators understand ver. 8 as the second member of the comparison begun in ver. 7. If so, whatever the punctuation, it is preferable to make the longer pause after "in the midst of you," the shorter after "children": *as when a nurse cherishes her own children, so, etc.* Thus the rest of the sentence furnishes an illustration and expansion of the first clause. Paul's converts were his children; he looks upon them with the unutterable tenderness of a mother gazing into the face of the child at her breast. In one other passage (Gal. 4:19) he uses the same figure to express his affection for the souls God had given him; elsewhere he compares himself to a father. See ver. 11 below; 1 Cor. 4:15; Philemon 10. **So being affectionately desirous.** The Greek does not require "even so." The clause should be separated by a comma only from the preceding, the 'so' corresponding to the foregoing "as." The word rendered 'being affectionately desirous' occurs only here in the New

8 as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were 9 become very dear to us. For ye remember, brethren,

Testament. It means "to love tenderly," "to have a fond affection for." **We were willing (pleased) to have imparted unto you.** The rendering of the Revised Version is better, "We were well pleased," not merely 'we were willing' but "we were glad," "were cheerfully ready." **Our own souls**—better, "our own lives," which is the rendering preferred by Davidson, Lünemann, Vaughan, and by the lexicons of Cremer and Thayer. It tends only to confusion of thought to attach, with Ellicott, a deeper meaning than "life" to the Greek word (*ψυχή*) in this and similar connection. It does not mean "our lives and souls, our very existences." Compare Matt. 20:28; John 10:11, 15, 17; and other similar passages in which the Revisers have properly (as they have not done in this case) rendered "life." Such labor as the apostle's in and for the church was really an impartation of his life. Health and energy and life were given out constantly in his preaching and his sufferings from persecution, along with exhausting manual labor day and night. To use his expression in Phil. 2:17, he was pouring out his life as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of their faith. And why? **Because ye were (become) dear to us**—because of the love we bore you; the word 'dear' might be rendered *beloved*; in the original it is the adjective derived from the word rendered "love." In reading these verses belonging to the earliest of Paul's recorded words, we begin already to feel the sweep and swell of that Christlike love, whose tide rolls on with gathering force through to the end of his ministry. His thought is a tide freighted with divine truth, but impelled by an energy more resistless than logic, the fervent, passionate love of a great heart.

**9. For ye remember.** Confirmation of the general fact dwelt upon in the preceding

suits *νήπιοι*, and would be an unlikely periphrasis for *εἰς ὑμᾶς* with *ἡπτος*." But there is no apparent reason for considering the phrase a periphrasis for *εἰς ὑμᾶς*. The force of Dr. Hort's suggestion lies wholly in the assumption that *ἡπτος* is ordinarily transitive, requiring to be supplemented by an objective word or phrase. On the contrary, it is in most instances used absolutely. If

any objective supplement were employed, it would rather be *πρὸς ὑμᾶς*, as in 2 Tim. 2:24, than *εἰς ὑμᾶς*. But *ἡπτος* quite as suitably as *νήπιοι* may be followed by the prepositional adjunct. There are few passages in which the entire context so manifestly prefers one reading to another.

for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.

our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you who believe: 11 as ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and

verses, namely, the spirit of love and self-sacrifice in which they had preached the gospel among the Thessalonians. This is probably the connection indicated by 'for.' See note on ver.

**1. Our labour and travail.** While the apostolic company were in Thessalonica they were partly supported by gifts received from the recent converts at Philippi; for the rest they depended on their manual labor—*labor and toil*—night and day; Paul refers again to this fact in almost the same words. (2 Thess. 3:8.) From Acts 18:3, we learn that his handicraft was tent making. As some explain, tent cloth making; or, rather, as is probable, the working up of haircloth into such articles as were manufactured from it, especially tents. The word rendered 'working' is that commonly applied to manual labor. Five years later Paul speaks of this as still his habit: "Even unto this present hour . . . we labour working with our own hands." (1 Cor. 4:11, 12.)

**Because we would not be chargeable unto** (or, *be a charge upon*) **any of you.** In his letter to the Corinthians, among whom he pursued a similar course, he explains more fully his motive in this matter. It was "that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." See 1 Cor. 9:7-12. To "cut off occasion from them which desire an occasion" (2 Cor. 11:17-12); that is, to silence misrepresentations of his own aims, as well as to prevent others from turning the apostolic office into a money-getting profession. Compare also 2 Cor. 12:13-18. He was determined above all things to be absolutely free from suspicion of mercenary motives. Later on in his ministry he showed the same care, after he began to give much attention to collecting money from the Gentile churches for the relief of their suffering brethren in Judea. **We preached unto you the gospel of God.** This three times repeated phrase, 'the gospel of God,' is not redundant. It emphasizes the significant element of their mission—that which most of all marked their advent in Thessalonica as eventful; they were the bearers of a proclamation from God. Compare ver. 2 above, and

ver. 13 below. **We preached**—the word thus rendered means simply heralded, proclaimed; it has neither here nor elsewhere in the New Testament any formal, ecclesiastical sense, and denotes merely such proclamation of the way of salvation, as was incumbent on every believer according to his gifts or opportunities.

**10. Ye are witnesses**, etc.—earnest reiteration in summary of what he has just been setting forth in detail—namely, that their work in Thessalonica had been wrought in holiness, love, and fidelity. **Holily and justly** are terms that describe the same conduct in two aspects, the former as conformed to God's character in itself, the latter as conformed to his law; they are both positive; **unblameably** expresses the same idea negatively. **Among (or, toward) you that believe.** Alford, Lünemann, and others render "to you"—that is, in your view, but without sufficient reason. It is sometimes forgotten that the utmost fidelity in word and deed is due to Christians, as well as to unbelievers. Our example is potent for good or evil in the church as well as out of it.

**11. As ye know how we [dealt with] every (each) one of you.** The language of this verse is not grammatically regular; in this outpouring of the heart, the writer breaks free from the rules of colder speech; the omitted verb (supplied by "dealt with" in the Revised Version) is naturally suggested by the "behaved ourselves" of ver. 10. The turn of thought now naturally suggests a father's love (as in ver. 7, it was a mother's to which the apostle would compare his own), the inciting, encouraging, admonishing oversight of a father. **Exhorted and comforted and charged.** *Exhorting you and encouraging [you] and testifying.* 'Exhorting' is the corresponding verb to "exhortation" in ver. 3, on which see note above. *Encouraging.* "This denotes the *soothing*, as the former word the *animating* side of Christian encouragement." (Vaughan.) More than the former word it seems to imply an appeal to the feelings.

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

12 encouraging *you*, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who <sup>1</sup> calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read *called*.

*Testifying*: “adjuring,” “earnestly charging,” as if in the presence of God as witness. This is the meaning according to Grimm, Ellicott, Lünemann, and others. The apostles urged home their message to the hearts and consciences of those who would hear, with all the force and momentum that an intense earnestness could impart, and that not only to audiences, but to individuals, man by man, *each one of you*. So Paul to the Ephesians: “By the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:31.)

**12. That ye would walk**, etc. This clause contains the *substance* of their exhortation, not merely its *purpose*, as the Revised Version renders it. Better: “Exhorting you and encouraging and earnestly charging you to walk worthily,” etc. In Eph. 4:1, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called,” the exhortation is followed (5:1), by its more definite explanation, “Be ye therefore followers (*imitators*) of God . . . and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you.” Compare also Col. 1:10; 1 John 2:6. “Walking” is a figure “used fifty times in the New Testament for the habitual conduct and daily life of man.” The specific exhortations in the later part of each of the two epistles—to purity, chastity, industry, prayer, teachableness, reverence, Christian affection, against covetousness, idleness, etc.—show what topics were embraced in these earnest exhortations. To train these newly-won converts from Paganism in the duties of the new life enlisted the apostle’s utmost zeal and energy. He was not content to gain great numbers of converts, or merely to found a church, but wished to plant it on the permanent foundation of an instructed faith, and to see it walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless. The standard set is infinitely high: they are to live in a manner “worthy of God.” “Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48.) **Who hath called you into his kingdom and glory.** This added clause forcibly brings to mind the great

reward of which the believer has the promise—the motive fitted to stimulate him to the most earnest endeavor. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34.) **Hath called**, rather, *calleth*, as rightly in the Revised Version. It is understood by most commentators as a progressive present, *is calling*; “uninterrupted continued” (Lünemann); “a reiterated sound, continued through the individual life.” (Vaughan.) But is it not simply the general present? It ascribes the call which the believer has heard to God; he is the caller—“he who calls,” as in Rom. 9:11; Gal. 5:8. So also he is the Giver of the Holy Spirit, as in 4:8 of this Epistle, where the present is used as here. The principal “ancient authorities” for “called” (*καλέσαντος*), to which the margin of the Revised Version refers, are the two uncials, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, and six or more cursives, to which are to be added a number of versions—at least their apparent testimony. *Call* (called, calling) is a somewhat frequent term in the writings of Paul. He never uses it, however, in the broader sense which it frequently has elsewhere in Scripture, as denoting that universal invitation of the gospel, which is accepted by some, refused by others. It is always the *heard* call of which he speaks. “Only those are spoken of as called by God who have listened to his voice addressed to them in the gospel, hence those who have enlisted in the service of Christ.” (Thayer.) It is correct to define “calling” as the effectual working of divine grace upon the elect, by which they are made regenerate; or in Weiss’ statement as “the divine act of grace through which God effectually calls the elect to faith, and thereby to participation in the fellowship of salvation” (“Bib. Theol. of the New Testament,” I., p. 296). *Effectually*, however, is not in the word itself, and forms no prominent element in its meaning. As a matter of fact to *call* is to *call effectually*. This arises from the point of view of the

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing; because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

13 And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.

1 Gr. *the word of hearing.*

writer, who is addressing Christians, or those whom he assumes to be such. But the idea of efficaciousness is not contained in the term as such: it only follows from the character of the persons who are viewed as having become the subjects of the call. See remarks on this point in Philippi, "Commentary on Romans," 8:28. Due attention to Paul's language in Rom. 8:30, will suggest the limitation of the term as employed in his epistles: "whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified." The divine *call* in the realization of the plan of redemption is conditioned by election, and is followed by justification. "In Paul's epistles," says Ellicott, "the gracious work of calling is always ascribed to the Father."

"Tis God's all-animating voice  
That calls thee from on high."

In 5:24, at the close of the letter, he refers again to this call, of which he and his companions had been bearers, and stamps it with the seal of an apostolic promise: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." **His kingdom** is the kingdom of Christ to be established in its final glory at his appearing. In the gospels, and elsewhere in the New Testament, "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," "Kingdom of Christ," are synonymous terms. "And glory"—"his own eternal glory of which all true members of the Messianic kingdom shall be partakers." Vaughan: "Glory is the *effulgence of light*. Applied to a person it is the manifestation of excellence." This disclosure of God in his holiness and excellence is the goal of the Christian's hope. "Let us rejoice in *hope of the glory of God*." (Rom. 5:2.) The reader will lose the full significance of the apostle's words here, if with Olshausen he takes 'his kingdom and glory' to be merely equivalent to "his glorious kingdom." "Glory" leads our thoughts forward to the final consummation of the Messianic kingdom, when "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Rom. 2:11.) The

glory which believers are to inherit is the glory which Christ had with the Father "before the world was." See John 17:5; compare ver. 22 in the same chapter.

**13-16.** Thus far as to the manner in which the gospel was *delivered* to them; the apostle now reminds them once more how they *received* it. The reminiscence of the latter is equally significant and encouraging. It inspires him anew with grateful joy. The secret of the gospel's success among them, so far as *they* were concerned, was that they received it as the word of God, *not* as the word of men.

**13. For this cause**—in view of the loving desire and labor for your salvation (referring to the theme of the preceding paragraph)—**also . . . we.** You remember with gratitude our efforts in your behalf (compare "yourselves," "ye remember," "ye are witnesses," ver. 1, 9, 10); we on our part are grateful. **Thank God without ceasing**—an illustration of the precept he gives at the close of the Epistle, "Pray without ceasing." **Because (that) when ye received the word of God, etc.**; or received from us the word of the message, [even the word] of God—that is, "when ye received from us God's word spoken in your hearing." The position of the latter phrase in the original is such as to indicate a slight emphasis. See note on "gospel of God," ver. 9 above. *Word of message* is literally "the word of hearing," or "the word heard": it describes a spoken message. See the same phrase in Heb. 4:2, where the Common Version has "the preached word," rendered in the Revised Version "the word of hearing." Thus far in the history of the church the gospel was for the most part a spoken gospel. There is no mention in any of the apostolic epistles, of any written account of our Lord's ministry or teachings. During thirty years or more after Christ's ascension the teaching "of all nations" was done by the living preacher, not by the circulation of apostolic books among the heathen. **Ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of**

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

14 lieve. For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your

**God.** When ye received or heard the word, you did not close your souls against it, but you accepted it. 'Received,' properly 'accepted,' a different word from the previous 'received.' *Accepted* implies not only a hearing of the gospel, but its acceptance into mind and heart. The supplying of 'it' and 'as' in the Common Version is necessary, in order to show what is probably the true sense of the original. Ellicott interprets otherwise, considering 'the word of men' to be the first object 'accepted.' The apostle again lays stress upon the point already made prominent in this chapter. His message was no human word, but God's word. See 4: 15, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," with which compare 4: 2. His message is a communication from God to men through Christ and the Holy Spirit; "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10: 17, Rev. Ver.) "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth." (1 Cor. 2: 13.) This must have been a vital question with these converts just won from Paganism, or in many instances from Jewish proselytism, now cut off from all share in the world about them and environed with hatred and persecution. They might well ask themselves: Are we relying on the mere word of an enthusiast, or can we trust his promises and predictions as the unerring certainties of a supernaturally attested revelation from the one living and true God, and the risen king Jesus Christ? Paul assures them that his message, not *contains*, but *is* in truth the word of God, and pours forth unceasing gratitude to the Revealer of the word that it was accepted as such by the Thessalonians. Them it profited, being "mixed with faith." **Which effectually worketh also in you that believe**—it has become in you an in-working force or energy; the Greek verb is cognate with our word "energy." The word of God *received as such* became a word living and active. (Neb. 4: 12.) It was transmitted into right living, holy character, and in particular, as he goes on to state, into heroic endurance for Christ. It wrought thus in the

hearts of those *who believed*; in such the Holy Spirit made it his instrument "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," the means of bringing about "the will of God" alluded to in 4: 3, namely, their sanctification. To go back to the apostles' starting point at the opening of the chapter, his gospel was *not found vain*. Preached in power, received in faith as the word of God, it became the power of God unto salvation. The word here rendered "worketh," expressive of the action of an in-working force quite different from "working," ver. 9 above, is used to denote the overcoming energy of believing prayer (James 5: 16); but also on the other hand the *destructive* energy of sin in the soul. (Rom. 7: 5.)

**14. For ye . . . became followers (imitators), etc.** No stronger proof could be adduced of the renewing transforming energy of the gospel in them than their endurance of persecutions such as the Judean Christians had been called upon to endure. The churches in Palestine were the earliest sufferers. We can scarcely take it for granted with Lünenmann that the Thessalonians imitated their Judean brethren "not in *intention or design*," but merely "in *actual fact or result*." There was doubtless much inter-communication among the newly-formed Christian communities; and from Paul himself, if from no other, they would learn the martyr history of the Palestine churches—an example to kindle like courage and nerve them to like fortitude. **In Christ Jesus:** added to define these churches or assemblies as distinctively *Christian*. As the terms were then used, "a congregation of God in Judea" might be understood to mean a synagogue of Jews. **For ye also have suffered like things,** etc. The membership of this Church being mainly Gentile (see Introduction), it was their *own countrymen*,—namely, *Pagans* of Thessalonica,—not Jewish residents, from whom they most suffered, though, as we learn from Acts 17: 5, the Jews were often the prime instigators of persecution. Similarly also at Iconium (Act. 14: 2), and in Lystra (Act. 14: 19). "The re-

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is to come upon them to the uttermost.

15 own countryman, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins alway: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

mark of Tertullian seems to have ever been very true in reference to the early church—*'synagogas Judeorum, fontes persecutionum'*; *'The synagogues of the Jews, founts of persecutions.'* (Ellicott.) That by the fellow-countrymen here spoken of Jews are not intended is shown by the evidently intentional contrast between "you"—"your own" and "they"—"the Jews."

**15, 16.** The mention of the Jewish persecution diverts the apostle for a moment from his main thought. With fervid indignation he breaks away to rehearse the awful crimes of the Jews, culminating in the desperate attempt they were now making to shut the door of hope and of salvation to the Gentiles. His words recall—perhaps he himself had them in mind—our Lord's own utterances of denunciation and warning. In one brief phrase he refers to their treatment of himself and his companions, "and drove us out," but in no tone of revengeful anger for that. It was not that which kindled his indignation. He never forgot that he had himself been a persecutor; his own sufferings did not quench his passionate desire for the salvation of his own people. On this point the eloquent argument in Romans, chapters 9-11, speaks for itself. The capital count in the indictment against them, and that which most of all fires his soul with holy anger, is their opposition to the salvation of the heathen. **Who both killed.** "Both" does not correctly represent the force of the Greek connective; here, as elsewhere, it marks an explanatory correspondent clause. If rendered at all into English, *also* is the word; or we may omit it, and render the clause "they who killed," etc. **The Lord Jesus, and their own prophets.** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets." (Matt. 23:37.) "I will send unto them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute." (Luke 11:49.) **And have persecuted us (and drove us out).** "Some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city." (Matt. 23:34.) The word translated by the Revisers

"drove out" is rendered "persecute" in our text and in the passage from Luke cited above. The general sense is the same, but primarily, as the use of the same word in the Septuagint shows, the thought is of *driving forth* from city to city. This had been the experience of the apostles; thus it had been with Paul from the time of his first preaching in Damascus. By "us" he doubtless means particularly himself and his companions known to his readers. **And they please not God, and are contrary to all men.** *In what respect* this applies to the Jews he explains in the following verse; namely, in their opposition to the conversion of the Gentiles. Herein lay their impiety and their inhumanity. Observe also that Paul does not here characterize the Jewish nation and policy in their original and proper character; he refers particularly to their attitude at that period. The nation was becoming more intensely and malignantly Pharisaic. What this meant, what spirit and policy, may be seen from our Lord's great denunciatory discourse against the scribes and Pharisees, contained in the twenty-third of Matthew. The impiety and inhumanity for which Christ arraigned the Jewish leaders—"Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to enter" (Revised Version)—became more and more manifest during the forty years subsequent to the Crucifixion.

**Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved**—a specification belonging to the two preceding clauses (according to Lünenmann and Alford, only to the latter), and hence should be separated only by a comma. Thus the portion of the sentence beginning "and please not God" and ending "that they may be saved" is to be read in close connection, and to be slightly separated from what precedes and follows. See Vaughan, Auberlen, Lillie, Rigenbach. "Forbidding"—more accurately, "hindering"; they are hindering us from proclaiming to the Gentiles the message necessary for their salvation. **To fill up their sins alway.** The clause

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

17 But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great de-

I Gr. a season of an hour.

denotes purpose. To the apostle this deepening hostility to the gospel presented itself as one manifestation of that blind, mad determination with which they were rushing to their doom. That they were engaged in filling to the brim the cup of their crimes open-eyed—fully conscious of the nature and results of their course, is not affirmed; only that they were invincibly persisting in that course which was filling the still lacking measure of their sin. “The word means *to fill up, to fill again higher*, so that, as it were, the still empty space in the vessel becomes ever higher.” (Auberlen.) “Theologically considered,” says Ellicott, “it mainly refers to the eternal purpose of God which unfolded itself in this willful, and at last judicial blindness on the part of his chosen people.” Still Paul’s language finds a nearer explanation in the ordinary usages of speech, without referring it to the underlying Scriptural truth of which Ellicott speaks. **For (but) the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost**—the wrath of God that must inevitably pursue such sin. Long predicted, long on its way, it has now overtaken them, and is ready to break forth. ‘To the uttermost’—literally, *to the end*, that is, so as to make an end, fully to accomplish itself. “It had reached its extreme bound, and would at once pass into inflictive judgments. As the cup of the sin had been gradually filling, so had the measure of the divine wrath. It can scarcely be doubted that in these words the apostle is pointing prophetically to the misery and destruction, which in less than fifteen years came upon the whole Jewish nation.” (Ellicott.)

**2: 17-3: 13. Assurance of His Undiminished Affection.**—Since our departure we have kept you in our hearts. We live in glory and in joy continually because of you. We sought to return to you and Satan prevented. Then I sent Timothy from my side to strengthen your faith and courage. And now the good news he has just brought revives our joy and renders our prayers in your behalf still more earnest. This section closes the first division of the letter. A free outpour-

ing of the heart, its simple unstudied language teems, not with apostolic instruction, but with tender regret, solicitude, loving joy and exultation, with thanksgiving and prayer. Intent on keeping unbroken the bond between himself and his converts, he opens his heart to them, showing how it has been during the interval of enforced absence. He assures them of his constant love, and his desire for their welfare. The passage is one that will least bear to be taken to pieces phrase after phrase by a cold and unsympathetic logic. Its best and deepest lessons are to the heart. The reader who will learn them must make himself one of the little band of Christians who gathered to hear the message that had come from their apostolic father and leader—from him who had been as an angel of God to them, to whom they would doubtless have been as ready as their Galatian brethren even to pluck out and give their eyes.

**17. But we**—‘we’ slightly emphatic: but now to speak of *ourselves*; transition to the writer’s own experience, including, of course, his companions, Silas and Timothy. Many, with Lünemann, consider ‘we’ to resume from ver. 13; but the following section seems to deal with a new topic, quite separate from the preceding. **Being taken from you.** (Revised Version, *being bereaved of you*). After we had been sundered from you, left desolate and solitary, for a short time, in person not in heart, we became the more exceedingly eager with great desire to look again upon your faces. *Bereaved* (*ἀποφθανισθέντες*) is from the word rendered “comfortless,” John 14: 18, in the Common Version, by the Revisers “desolate”; our word “orphan” is derived from it. It vividly describes the desolateness of soul in which the apostle left his heroic friends and followers at Thessalonica. **Endeavoured the more abundantly.** Why ‘the more’? For the very reason of this bereaving separation. Our hearts were still with you, and absence sharpened desire to see your faces; so Calvin, Winer, Vaughan, Lillie. Ellicott makes it refer to the phrase **in presence, not in heart**; Lünemann and Auber-

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

18 sire: because we would fain have come unto you, I 19 Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his 20 coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.

<sup>1</sup> Gr. presence.

len, to the phrase **for a short time**—that the separation had occurred so recently made our desire to see you the greater.

**18. Wherefore we would have come unto you.** ‘Wherefore’ (Revised Version, ‘Because’) might better be rendered ‘for.’ To confirm what he has just said of his desire to see them; *for, or the fact being, we had the purpose to come, once and again*; I, indeed, the writer, not only once but *twice*. For himself he can speak of *two* such occasions; but his plans of revisiting the church were each frustrated.—**But (and) Satan hindered us.** When the early translation and King James’s revisers rendered ‘but Satan hindered us,’ they expressed the connection which they thought Paul ought to have intended, but not that, which judging from the Greek conjunction used, he did intend. It connects the two clauses so that they are viewed as parts of the same fact: we purposed—Satan hindered; hardly to be separated by a semicolon, as in the Common and Revised Versions. That the obstacle to his plans was in some way referable to the evil one himself the apostle unmistakably asserts. In Rom. 1:18 and 15:22 he speaks of having been hindered from visiting that church, but the hindrance is not there ascribed to Satan. Conjecture cannot inform us what agencies Satan employed in this case, or how Paul discovered them to be from him; it was an agency so manifestly evil that he could confidently attribute it to “the god of this world,” “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Compare 2 Cor. 12:7, where he terms the “thorn in the flesh” “a messenger of Satan to buffet me,” given, however, *by the Lord*, “that I should not be exalted overmuch.”

**19, 20. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?** As accounting for his desire and purpose to see them, this sentence, although put in the vivid form of a rhetorical appeal, is introduced

by the apostle’s constant ‘for’ argumentative. In the future of my hope, in the picture of my joy, I see you, even you, your very selves to whom I write. Only one other church does Paul thus address, “my joy and my crown,” also a Macedonian church, that at Philippi. See Phil. 4:1. ‘Crown of rejoicing,’ *glorying*—that victorious wreath in which I shall glory, when the Lord comes. The winner in the great Grecian games bore away, as his prize, amid the assembled multitudes of the Hellenic world, a chaplet of leaves. Paul here and elsewhere makes it the emblem of the final reward given to the Christian for faithful service. “And when the chief shepherd shall be manifested ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:4, Rev. Ver.) “Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.” (1 Cor. 9:25.) In the present instance, it is the converts he has gained for Christ who are to be his prize-crown upon the great day. The phrase is one caught from the Old Testament. The Greek words rendered here “crown of glory” occur in Ezek. 16:12; 23:42, and Prov. 16:31 of the Septuagint. Compare also 2 Cor. 1:14: “We are your glorying, even as ye also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.” **In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.** In the judgment of Ellicott, Lünemann, Westcott and Hort, and many others, this part of the sentence belongs to both the preceding questions. They would read, “For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying—or are not even ye?—in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” ‘At his coming’; namely, when he shall come. In the presence of (*before*) him—namely, at the last judgment which is then to take place. Concerning the word here rendered “coming” (*παροντα*), more will be said in connection with 4:15.

**20. For ye are our glory and joy.** This justifies and sums up the preceding assurances in one comprehensive utterance of devoted

<sup>1</sup> For the proper punctuation, see Westcott and Hort’s Greek Text.

## CHAPTER III.

WHEREFORE when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and <sup>1</sup> God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read *fellow-worker with God*.

love. ‘Our glory’—that which will bring the highest honor—that wherein we shall exult and triumph at the last day. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dau. 12:3.)

**Ch. 3: 1-10.** *Timothy Sent to Confirm their Faith. Paul's Rejoicing over the Good News he has Just Brought Back.* These and the following verses to the end of the chapter stand in close connection with the preceding paragraph. The third chapter should properly have begun with ver. 17 above.

**1-2 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear**—literally, *no longer bearing it*. By ‘we’ here Paul probably means himself, falling back (from ver. 18 above) into the plural form that prevails throughout this letter. This is the opinion of most commentators. Bengel and others, however, consider it to include Silas; and Bishop Lightfoot considers it “at least doubtful whether St. Paul ever uses the plural of himself alone.” **We thought it good to be left . . . and sent Timothy.** It will be seen from Acts 17:14, 15, that Silas and Timothy did not accompany Paul from Berea to Athens, but that they afterward rejoined him at Corinth. If Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica, *from Athens*, we are to suppose a visit of Timothy (and perhaps of Silas also) to Athens that Luke has passed over in silence. There are two arrangements of the recorded facts, either of which will bring Luke’s narrative and the allusions here into full accordance. “(1) Timotheus was despatched to Thessalonica, not from Athens but from Berea, a supposition quite consistent with the apostle’s expression of ‘consenting to be left alone at Athens.’ In this case Timotheus would take up Silas somewhere in Macedonia on his return, and the two would join St. Paul in company; not,

however, at Athens, where he was expecting them, but later on at Corinth, some delay having arisen. This explanation, however, supposes that the plurals ‘we consented,’ ‘we sent’ (*πέδοκήσαμεν, ἐπέμψαμεν*), can refer to St. Paul alone. The alternative method of reconciling the accounts is as follows: (2) Timotheus and Silas did join the apostle at Athens, where we learn from the Acts that he was expecting them. From Athens he despatched Timotheus to Thessalonica, so that he and Silas (*ἥτεις*) had to forego the services of their fellow-laborers for a time. This mission is mentioned in the Epistle, but not in the Acts. Subsequently he sends Silas on some other mission, not recorded in either the history or the Epistle; probably to another Macedonian church, Philippi for instance, from which he is known to have received contributions about this time, and with which, therefore, he was in communication, 2 Cor. 11:19; compare Phil. 4:14-16. Silas and Timotheus returned together from Macedonia and joined the apostle at Corinth.” (Smith’s “Dictionary of the Bible,” Vol. IV., p. 3225.) See also Conybeare and Howson’s “Life and Epistles of St. Paul,” ch. XI.

**Our brother, and minister of God.** The word “minister” (*διάκονος*) might appropriately be rendered “servant”; compare Matt. 20:26, Revised Version. “But whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister” (margin, “servant”). “The constant practice of the apostle when he had occasion specially to mention his faithful associates to designate them by some honorable appellative.” (Lünenmann.) Years later Paul writes from his Roman prison to the Philippians of Timothy, “For I have no man likeminded who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel.” (2:20-22.) To ‘minister’ in the Re-

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto,  
4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I

3 comfort *you* concerning your faith; that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that 4 hereto we are appointed. For verily, when we were with you, we told you, <sup>1</sup>beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and 5 ye know. For this cause I also, when I could no

<sup>1</sup> Or, *plainly*.

vised Version, is added the phrase **in the gospel of Christ**, that is, *in preaching or promoting the gospel*. Compare the closing phrase of the sentence just quoted from Philippians.

**To establish you and to comfort you.** 'Comfort,' better rendered *encourage*, or *exhort*; the exhortation was one that especially concerned *their faith*. Here read Acts 14: 21, 22: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, *confirming* the souls of the disciples, *exhorting them to continue in the faith*, and that *through many tribulations* we must enter into the kingdom of God." The words *confirm, establish, strengthen*, describe no small part of Paul's apostolic and ministerial labor; compare Acts 15: 32, 41; 16: 5: 18: 23; Rom. 1: 11; 16: 25; 1 Thess. 3: 13; 2 Thess. 2: 17; 3: 3. There was ever present to his mind the danger that the new converts might make shipwreck of faith, involving not only their own spiritual ruin, but irretrievable disaster to churches, and public shame and injury to the cause. Hence his repeated visitation of churches already established by him, postponing for years plans of wider missionary enterprise; hence the long periods of settled labor with such churches as those of Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus—his ministry in the latter city covering a space at one time of more than three years. If a pastor in our day and country finds the growth of his church retarded, and its efforts enfeebled, by the ignorance, error, and perverted moral sense prevalent among his converts—converts reared amid a Christian civilization and many of them in Christian families—how much more an apostle who gathered his churches out from the communities of the Pagan world. They needed warning, incessant inculcation of the simplest precepts, systematic education in Christian doctrine. They were to be trained to an orderly life before the world, and to organized activity within the church, into

habits of Christian thinking, morality, and benevolence. In all such labor he found Timothy one of his heartiest and most efficient co-workers.

**3. That no man should be moved by these afflictions.** The sense will appear more distinctly if we render: "and to *exhort* you concerning your faith *that no man be moved*," etc. The latter clause is the object of "exhort" (rendered 'comfort' in the text). So Buttmann, "Grammar," p. 264, and most commentators. The afflictions to which he especially refers are doubtless the persecutions which began with the establishment of the church, and which still continued. **We are appointed thereunto**—a truth well known to them and a strong ground of encouragement. This persecution and suffering is not something unexpected, no untoward accident involving possible disaster, but was expressly appointed. It was *a part of the plan*, of our Lord's plan for us, and we told you beforehand of it. 'Appointed' here is the same word that is used in Phil. 1: 16: "I am set for the defence of the gospel." So the Christian is *set, stationed, appointed*, to endure affliction. This is included in the gracious purpose of Christ for each church and for each believer. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you." (1 Peter 4: 12, Rev. Ver.) What infinite consolation! "Let us hear who have ears to hear," says Chrysostom on this verse; "hereunto is the Christian appointed. For concerning all the faithful is this said." On the general truth implied here, see Dr. Bushnell's sermon, "Every Man's Life a Plan of God."

**4. We told you beforehand**—forewarning and thus forearming them for the crisis. Paul in this followed the example of Christ, who graciously forewarned his disciples of the trouble that should follow his departure from them. See Matt. 24: 25; John 13: 19; 14: 29. "I have told before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe."

sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, 6 and our labour should be in vain. But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, 7 longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your

**5. For this cause I sent.** The Revised Version reads "I also," which seems not to give precisely the meaning called for by the context; the Greek conjunction is not unfrequently used to affix an antithetic or resumptive emphasis, that an English writer would leave to be supplied by the voice. Here it adds a slight emphasis to the subject 'I' (already emphatic in the Greek) and perhaps marks it more distinctly as a repetition of the subject in ver. 1 above, by which repetition the leading thought is resumed. See a similar use of 'also' in 2:13; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:9. **Lest by some (any) means the tempter, etc.:** 'the tempter' is, of course, Satan, so called also in Matthew's account of our Lord's temptation. **Should have tempted you and our labour be in vain**—the first clause implying a fear with reference to something past, the second with reference to the future. I feared that Satan might have succeeded in weakening your faith, and that, in that case, my labor in your behalf might therefore finally come to naught. This recognition of the dependence of his final success upon the steadfastness of his converts appears also in other letters. See Gal. 4:11, and particularly Phil. 2:16, where after exhorting the Philippians to go on working out their salvation with fear and trembling, and to do all things without murmurings and disputings, he adds: "that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain, neither labor in vain." (Revised Version.)

**6-10. Paul's Joy over the News Brought by Timothy.**—In one view we may regard these verses as forming the pivot-point of the Epistle: they must have been listened to, when read for the first time to the assembled church, with beating heart and breathless interest. We learn here the immediate occasion of the letter, and obtain the key to its successive glad refrains of thanksgiving, joy, and prayer. This return of Timothy is supposed to be that mentioned in Acts 18:5, when with Silas he rejoined Paul at Corinth.

The news brought from Thessalonica was good news, and a source of unspeakable comfort to his heart; namely, that their faith and mutual love were bearing the terrible strain of affliction and persecution, and also that their love to him, their confidence in him as their teacher and leader, were unweakened by this continued absence. What the other items of intelligence brought by Timothy were we can only conjecture from the precepts and exhortations contained in the fourth and fifth chapters. Similar is the passage in 2 Cor. 7:5-7, a letter of some five years later date, and thought to have been written from Macedonia or some part of Northern Greece, to Corinth, the city from which the present letter goes to Thessalonica. In the following verses, as in the closing verses of the preceding chapter, the style pulsates with joy. The black night of suspense and anxiety "lest the tempter had tempted" them was over: with the morning joy had come. The general tenor of the sentence, sufficiently plain in the Common Version, shows that Paul wrote immediately after Timothy's arrival. In the original the form of the verb ('were comforted,' ver. 7), taken in connection with the modifying adverbial phrase at the beginning of ver. 6, makes this still more clear. See Introduction, p. 15, 2.

**6, 7. But now when Timotheus, etc.**—more literally, "but Timothy having just now come"; the word rendered **brought us good tidings** usually in the New Testament means to bring the glad tidings of Christ's salvation; here used as in Luke 1:19 of other glad news.

**Good remembrance.** "As the following words more fully specify, a faithful and affectionate remembrance" (Ellicott.) **In all our affliction and distress.** These terms cannot be distinguished, as is done by Riggengbach,—that the former (*ἀνάγκη*) refers to the distress from without, the latter (*ἀκίνη*) its inward operation. The word here rendered 'affliction' (*ἀνάγκη*) occurs six times in 1 and 2 Corinthians and is there rendered five times "necessity" or "necessities" both in the Com-

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.  
 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

8 faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith 10 we joy for your sakes, before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

mon and the Revised Versions. What special afflictions were the lot of Paul during the first part of the sojourn in Corinth, we are not informed beyond what is stated in Acts 18:6, seq. He tells the elders of Ephesus: "The Holy Ghost testifieth unto me in *every city*, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." (Acts 20:22.) See also the passage cited above (2 Cor. 1:5): "We were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus," etc.

**8. For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord.** "Our God be thanked that Satan has *not* prevailed against you. You *do* still believe and love. Our fears have fled—again we live. Ah, could you but know it, our very life, all the hopes and rewards that make life of any worth to us, hang on your fidelity."

Observe that the 'if' does not imply doubt of their continued steadfastness; rather that the former fact, 'now we live,' is conditioned in thought (hence 'if' is almost equivalent here to "since") upon the latter, namely, 'that ye stand fast in the Lord.' We have here a typical utterance of the great apostle. But who can fully apprehend it except he who has had like experience? These are words of one who not only seeks the eternal salvation of men, but loves them as men, and covets their love. "The man whose picture this is," says Bunyan's Interpreter, "is one of a thousand; he can beget children, travail in birth with children, and nurse them himself, when they are born." These words are significant as a self-revelation. Similar are 1 Cor. 4: 14, 15; 2 Cor. 7: 2, 3; Phil. 1: 7; 3: 17, and the closing verses of chapter 3 above, wherein all purely personal consciousness and motives seem utterly extinguished by his absorbing solicitude and affection for his converts. It is only the superficial reader who finds in these verses but the lightly uttered sentiments of a transient hour, and fails to discern the meaning of this transcript of spiritual history. They do indeed make heart-music to

doctrine and precept; they warm and enliven didactic discourse. But more. As the gospels set before us, not a body of doctrine, but a living Christ, the Jesus of history, so the epistles of Paul bring before us a living apostle, in whom Christ was revealed as a personal, visible example to the church. It may be questioned whether the apostolic writings convey any facts or truths of profounder interest and importance, than are wrapt up in these and other similar heart-utterances of the great apostle. A careful study will show that they are not the ordinary commonplaces of emotional rhetoric. They are the singularly exact and truthful expressions of an inward life, made more impressive from known details of external history, such as in the present instance are furnished us in the seventeenth of Acts, and in the letter itself.

**9. For what thanks can we render again to God for you.** 'For'—to justify the bold figure he had just employed by calling to mind the greatness of the blessing. This is the third outburst of thanksgiving we find in the letter; especially called forth by the intelligence just now received of their steadfastness. "As he still thinks of it his emotions deepen and swell into a flood of joy which can only utter itself in praise." Prayer and thanksgiving are inseparable in the apostle's practice, as they are in his precept; See Phil. 4: 6. **We joy for your sakes before our God**—a pure, holy joy, which is not hindered, but heightened, because it is in his presence; standing in full view of God, his exultation only swells in a higher, stronger tide.

**10. Night and day praying exceedingly.** The participle 'praying' follows the verb 'joy,' and has a descriptive force; his rejoicing issues in prayer all the more constant and earnest (compare 2: 17), that he may again be with them, not in heart only, but in person. 'Exceedingly' is an emphatic compound, rendered by two words in Eph. 3: 20: "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." **Might perfect that which**

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

11 Now may <sup>1</sup>our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you: and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before <sup>1</sup>our God and Father, at the <sup>2</sup>coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or, *God and our Father*. . . . . <sup>2</sup> *Gr. presence* . . . . . <sup>3</sup> Many ancient authorities add *Amen*.

**is lacking in your faith.** What these deficiencies of faith were, appears, in part at least, farther on in the letter. Their faith was deficient in knowledge in many points. On one of these Paul proceeds to give instruction in the latter part of the next chapter. On its practical side, too, their faith needed perfecting. To supply what was lacking, to make those who abounded abound still more—this object urged his return. See note on 'establish you,' ver. 2 above. "Very frequent indeed in Paul's writings are the intimations of a strong desire and purpose to lead the churches onward to ever higher and clearer and more enlarged regions of faith." (Lillie.)

**11-13.** His wish (not strictly a prayer, but expressing the substance of a prayer) for his speedy return to them and for their abounding growth in Christian love.

**11. Now (may) God himself and our Father.** In the Greek 'himself' is strongly emphatic, and seems designed "to place in contrast the human agent with his earnest but foiled efforts (ch. 2:18) and God who, if he willed, could instantly and surely accomplish all." (Ellicott.) It turns the reader's thought to God as the Supreme Disposer of events. **And our Lord Jesus.** In 2 Thess. 2:16 the benediction invokes both the Father and Christ, but in the reverse order, the emphatic pronoun being prefixed to our Lord's name. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ and himself and God our Father," etc. In both places the double subject is followed (in the original) by a singular verb, a fact, however, on which the latitude of Greek usage forbids us to lay special stress. **Direct our way**—'direct' in its original sense—*open, make straight and clear* a way by which we may come. Compare with this and the preceding two verses, Rom. 1:9, 10: "Always in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you."

**12. And the Lord make you to increase**

**and abound.** 'You' (at the beginning of the sentence in Greek) has a slight emphasis. 'The Lord,' meaning Christ. For Christ is named "the Lord" in the context immediately before and after (ver. 11, 13); moreover, this is the prevailing usage in Paul's writings. The first person of the Trinity is expressly distinguished in the verse just named as "our God and Father." Blunt, "Annotated Bible," following Basil and Theophylact, understands 'Lord' as referring to the Holy Spirit, "the gift of love," he says, "being always regarded as a gift bestowed especially by him." But there is no intimation in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is the giver of love in distinction from joy, peace, and other gifts, which are ascribed both to Christ and the Spirit as their source. On 'abound,' see note on ver. 1 of the next chapter. **In love to one another and toward all.** Below (4:9) they are directly *exhorted* to abound in brotherly love. Here the apostle's desire views it as the result of the divine agency in the soul: *May the Lord "give the increase."* Love not only to *believers* but to *all*. Christian love widens so as to take in all men, even one's enemies. A universal Christian experience. **Even as we**—that is, even as we increase and abound in love toward you.

**13. To the end he may establish, etc.** Holiness is viewed as the goal of their spiritual career. Toward the goal of being finally **unblamable in holiness** their faith is to make constant progress "working *through love.*" This consummation is to be a matter of revelation and attestation *before God even (and) our Father.* See this same phrase in 1:3; and with its use in this connection compare 2:19: "before our Lord Jesus at his coming." **At the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.** See note on 4:15. The first occurrence of the word *coming* (*παροντος*) in the epistles is above in 2:19. His saints, namely, angels and glorified men together. The word 'saints' is here used probably in its'

## CHAPTER IV.

FURTHERMORE then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

wider scriptural sense, including the former. Compare Deut. 33:22; Jude 14. Christ is to come attended by angels: Matt. 25:31; "But when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him;" also 2 Thess. 1:7. Also by redeemed men. See 4:14, below, with the present passage. The latter is the prevailing New Testament meaning of the word.

CHAPTERS IV., V.—Second Portion of the Epistle.

**Ch. 4:1-12.** Exhortations to Sexual Purity (1-8); to Brotherly Love and other Duties (9-12).—The general scope of the first eight verses is unmistakable, though on several details of definition interpreters are far from being agreed. The following paraphrase will sketch the course of thought as explained in the subsequent notes:

"We have opened our hearts to you, brethren, we have told you our desires and prayers; hear our closing words of exhortation. When in Thessalonica we taught you what your daily life should be in order to please God. Ye do thus live. But we beseech and exhort you, as those who abide together with you in living fellowship with the Lord Jesus, that ye more and more excel therein. You know the commands which, coming through Jesus to us, we gave to you. Do you ask what will be pleasing to God—what his will regarding each one of you is? It is this, your sanctification, that ye may be, as I said above, 'unblameable in holiness'; in particular, that you keep yourselves from sexual impurity; this implies, for one thing, that each of you make himself master of his own body, regarding it as a thing holy and honorable, not employing it in lustful passion, as do the Gentiles, men who know not God; and secondly, that there be no gratifying of licentious desire at the expense of a Christian brother's honor or happiness. For, remember, God will take vengeance for all these things. We earnestly forewarned you on that point. As we said above, God's will contemplates your sanctification, not a life of impurity. Remember, therefore, that any

breach of these commands is to defy not our authority, but God's—the authority of him who hath made these very bodies of yours the temples of his Holy Spirit."

**1. Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you.** "Furthermore" (Revised Version, *finally*), a word used here "to mark the transition to the close of the epistle," as in 2 Thess. 3:1; Phil. 3:1. 'Then' hardly indicates an immediate connection with, or inference from the preceding verse, as maintained by Rigggenbach and others; it serves rather to introduce thoughts in accord with the tone or thought of the letter thus far; thus used, it has a *continuative* or *collective* force. On 'exhort,' see note on 2:3 and on 2:11.

**By (in) the Lord Jesus.** "The whole appeal is made *in Christ*; as by one who is united to him, and in virtue of that union." (Vaughan.) Both the entreaty and the exhortation will be void and forceless, except as appealing to Christian motives, as operating within the sphere of the regenerate life. Such, for the most part, was the apostolic *Paraclesis*—that is, *exhortation*. See Phil. 2:1.

**As ye have received of us.** The explicit apostolic teaching and example were to be authoritative rule to their converts. What they received from the apostles was what the apostles received from Christ. So it is distinctly taught in 1 Cor. 11:1, 2, 23; Gal. 1:12, and elsewhere. **To walk and to please God**—that is, 'and (thus) to please God,' indicating the end and aim of the 'walk,' the Christian's first desire. This delightful and inspiring conception of Christian endeavor, namely, to please God, to please Christ, is one not infrequent with Paul. See Col. 1:10, "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing"; compare 1 Cor. 7:32; 2 Tim. 2:4. "They who are in the flesh cannot please God," he asserts, (Rom. 8:8.) The phrase well embodies the spirit of that service of freedom and gladness into which the believer has entered under the perfect law of liberty. He desires no longer to please himself (Rom. 15:1), or to please man (Gal. 1:10), but God, who proveth the heart, (2:4), "him who enrolled him as a soldier."

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, *even your sanctification*, that ye should abstain from fornication:

2 —that ye abound more and more. For ye know what <sup>1</sup>charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, *even your sanctification*,

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *charges*.

(2 Tim. 2:4, Rev. Ver.) Rescued from the stern and hopeless bondage of the law, Paul naturally viewed his new life as a service of love and gratitude, its obedience as the spontaneous product of a new life force. **Ye would abound more and more.** 'Abound,' another frequent term with the apostle. He was himself ever "pressing toward the mark." From whatever height he had reached came back a constant "Excelsior" to his followers.

**2. For ye know what commandments—** or, it should probably be *charges*, as in the margin of Revision. **By (or, through) the Lord Jesus**—using the authority vested in us by him. The commandments given to you were his, not ours only. A similar use of the preposition is found in 1 Cor. 1:10, also Acts 1:2.

**3-5. For this is the will of God.** To these readers desiring 'to please God,' the mention of commands 'through the Lord Jesus' would naturally suggest the inquiry, "What is God's will? What is it that God desires of us, to which you now refer?" From this starting point in matters of Christian obligation, the apostle begins an emphatic exhortation to chastity. Vaughan and others err in advocating the unidiomatic translation, "a will of God." The Greek is equivalent to "God's will," of which 'the will of God' is merely a synonymous form. It is '*this*,' says the apostle; namely, **your sanctification**—that you be sanctified, become holy. (Lev. 19:2) "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy." Compare "unblameable in holiness" in 3:13. The believer is here exhorted to do for himself that which in 3:13 is viewed as the work or the gift of God; but the agency of the Spirit is also assumed in the present passage, ver. 8.

**That ye should abstain from fornication.** With this clause begins a threefold specification of one particular and important duty involved in the purpose and the obligation of the believer's sanctification. There are three clauses, each being a specifying ap-positive to "sanctification":

1. That ye abstain from fornication.

2. That each of you . . . possess himself of his own vessel.

3. That no man transgress and wrong his brother in the matter.

This analysis assumes that the whole paragraph, to the end of the eighth verse, treats of the duty of chastity. The correctness of the analysis depends chiefly on the proper reference of the phrase, "in the matter" (ver. 7), a point which will be considered in its place.

'Fornication' (see Acts 15:20, 29) includes, as generally in the Acts and the Epistles, all illicit commerce of the sexes. This was the one conspicuous form of immorality in the ancient world, whether Oriental, Greek, or Roman. As Dr. Hackett remarks, "The heathen mind had become so corrupt as almost to have lost the idea of chastity as a virtue." Unchastity was glorified in poetry, all the arts had combined to make it pleasing as well as seductive, and in the worship of not a few Pagan deities, it had secured for itself the sanctions of religion. "The Jews, as a nation, were probably the purest among all the races of mankind, yet even they did not regard this sin as being the moral crime which Christianity teaches us to consider it; and they lived in the midst of a world which regarded it as so completely a matter of indifference that Socrates has no censure for it, and Cicero declares that no Pagan moralist even dreamt of meeting it with an absolute prohibition." (Farrar, "Life and Work of St. Paul," ch. xxii.) Hence the unceasing admonitions of Paul, especially in his letters to the Greek churches—notably, to the Corinthians.

**That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel**—a most important precept, and fundamental to the whole exhortation. Chastity is more than mere abstinence from illicit intercourse. It implies the proper care and government of the body, which is to be got possession of and controlled for holy and honorable service, not in the passion of lust. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." See 1 Cor.

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

6: 13, and the whole passage. ‘Vessel’ (*σκεῦος*), in the sense of *body*. So in 2 Cor. 4: 7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels”; in 1 Peter 3: 7, “Giving honour unto the woman as unto the weaker vessel,” in which latter passage, the reference to the physical frame is at least predominant. “To possess his vessel,” or, as in Revised Version, “To possess himself of his own vessel,” is to bring it under his control, obtain the mastery over it, and that for God’s service, as is implied by the additional phrase. The duty of sanctifying the body, of bringing it into holy subjection, is much insisted on by Paul. (Rom. 6: 12.) “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof.” Compare ver. 19 of the same chapter; also Rom. 7: 5; 1 Cor. 9: 27. “I buffet my body and bring it into bondage.” Especially see 1 Cor. 6: 13-20. “But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord . . . Glorify God therefore in your body.” ‘Possess himself’ is the same word rendered “win” in Luke 21: 19—“In your patience ye shall *win* your souls”—that is, ye shall *gain possession* of your souls, save them for the everlasting life of the Redeemer’s kingdom. **In sanctification and honour**—denoting the mode and spirit in which the requirement is to be fulfilled. The believer will hold his body sacred and honorable—not only as the good handiwork of God, but because of its new purpose and destiny as a habitation of the Holy Spirit, and an heir of the resurrection. (1 Cor. 6: 19.) “Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” (1 Thes. 3: 21.) The Lord Jesus Christ “shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.” Compare also Rom. 8: 11, 23. **Not in the lust of concupiscence**—or, *Not in the passion of lust*. In strongest contrast to the holy and honorable use of the body, is set the abuse of it under the influence of evil desire, ‘lust,’ which, in effect, becomes ‘passion,’ a power enslaving the man. In illustration of his meaning, Paul had only to point to the **Gentiles which know not God**—*their* vice and degradation is not so much to be wondered at, for they know not God. See

4 that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust; even as the Gentiles who know not

elsewhere this same generic classification of the Gentiles. (Gal. 4: 8; 2 Thess. 1: 8.) Of reprobate Jews, he says (Titus 1: 16), “They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him.”

The above interpretation of these two verses—namely, that they enjoin upon each believer the sanctified use of his own body—is substantially that of the following authorities: Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact among the Greek Fathers; of Calvin, Bengel, Pelt, Olshausen, Meyer, Vaughan, and many others among the moderns. But the majority, of recent commentators adopt a different interpretation; that ‘vessel’ is figurative for “wife,” and that the precept enjoins upon each man to free himself from the temptation to fornication by holy and honorable wedlock. For this view are cited Theodore of Mopsuestia and Augustine; among many later authorities are Schoettgen, DeWette, Rigganbach, Alford, Ellicott, Dods, Boise, Grimm. In its favor are urged the following considerations:

(1) The equivalent of the word (*σκεῦος*) here rendered ‘vessel’ is sometimes found in the Rabbinic writings in the sense named. (Alford, it should be stated, extends the exhortation to female as well as male, “the female being included by implication, and bound to interpret on her side that which is said of the other.”)

To this first argument it may be replied that the assigned meaning is not elsewhere found in the New Testament. Appropriate enough to the coarse phraseology of the Talmud, it seems wholly unsuitable to the manner of Paul.

(2) The expression (*κτάσθαι γυναῖκα*), “to acquire, or possess one’s self of, a wife,” is frequent both with Jewish and Greek writers.

True, but in order to justify the meaning assigned to the passage, we need an instance of the phrase “acquire one’s own wife” in the sense of “acquire a wife for one’s self.” Those who advocate the above interpretation must, it is evident, take the pronoun not only in its *emphatic*, but in its *proleptic* sense; to acquire a wife to be *his own*—that is, *for himself*. The latter is the phraseology in the Septuagint rendering of Ruth 4: 10, one of the instances cited by Lünemann to sustain his interpretation.

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

6 God; that no man<sup>1</sup> transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we<sup>2</sup> forewarned you and testi-

1 Or, overreach.....2 Or, told you plainly.

(3) The analogy of 1 Cor. 7: 2: "But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband."

To this we reply that the proper parallel to the verses we are considering (4, 5) is rather to be found in the close of the *sixth* of 1 Corinthians. There, as here, Paul begins by emphasizing fornication as a sin against a man's own body; he then proceeds in the seventh chapter to develop the mutual duties of husband and wife as connected with this subject. Here, if we take the language in its obvious force, each one is exhorted to get possession of something that is already his own; that is, to subject it to his own will in the practice of that which is holy and honorable, as contrasted with the degrading immorality of the Gentiles. As pointed out above, this inculcation of sexual purity on the ground of the sacredness of the body is eminently characteristic of the apostle's method.

(4) The Greek pronoun (*ἴαυτοῦ*), "his own," occupies an emphatic position, whereas "a reference to the body of an individual cannot be emphatic." (Lünemann, Alford, Dods.)

On the contrary, the pronoun, though it may be considered emphatic here, is not so by *virtue of its position*. Its regular position is between the article and the noun, as in the present instance; an examination of classical Greek writers, as well as the critical texts of the New Testament, will abundantly confirm this statement. Further, that "a reference to the *body* of an individual cannot be emphatic," as Lünemann asserts, is contradicted by such passages as 1 Cor. 6: 18: "He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"; so also 1 Cor. 7: 4.

The above embrace the principal arguments urged by Lünemann, Alford, and others; that they are insufficient to sustain their interpretation is evident. On the other hand, we are led to adopt the rendering *body* by the following positive and distinct considerations:

First, it retains a recognized New Testament meaning of (*σκεῦος*), vessel, as has been shown above.

Second, this rendering of the sentence preserves the precise force of the verb (*εἰδέται*),

'know how to,' which plainly exhorts not to any one action (for example, the obtaining of a wife), but to a habitual or permanent *state* of the subject (for example, the control of the bodily appetites and passions); it implies that a power is to be acquired, not merely an act performed. See, in illustration of this point, examples of this verb "to know how," in Phil. 4: 12; 1 Tim. 3: 5; James 4: 17; 2 Peter 2: 9.

Third, it is the only natural and obvious sense of the expression 'possess himself of his own,' as found in the original; indeed, it is the sense *required* by the position of the Greek pronoun (*ἴαυτοῦ*), "his own."

Fourth, the clause contained in ver. 4, 5, enjoins, if the sentence is thus understood, a fundamental and universal duty. It contains the leading precept of the passage, as indeed the adjuncts 'in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust,' etc., seem designed to make it. The whole exhortation takes on that comprehensive character which the opening words in ver. 3 lead us to expect. It is an outline of the fuller instruction on this vital theme to the churches of that day, which the apostle afterward communicates in First Corinthians.

It may also be added that if one carefully considers the relation of the phrase 'in sanctification and honour' to the preceding, a phrase evidently intended to describe the manner and spirit of the procedure enjoined, its appropriateness at once appears, as applied to the Christian's consecration of his body; on the other interpretation, the phrase seems rather designed by the context to denote purpose. I take, therefore, the following as expressing the true sense of the passage: this is the will of God . . . that each one of you be able to obtain control of his own body, using it in holy and honorable service, not abusing it in lustful passion, as do the Gentiles.

**6. That no man go beyond** (or, *transgress*) **and defraud** (or, *wrong*) **his brother in any (the) matter**—the third of the specifications included in that personal 'sanctification' which 'the will of God' requires. But the clause itself is obscure. Either from our insufficient knowledge of the current phraseology of the time, or because Paul intention-

ally used vague language, preferring to hint his meaning rather than express it too clearly, the reader of to-day is unable to tell certainly what 'the matter' referred to is, or precisely what kind of defrauding or wrong to a brother is forbidden. Let us notice first the preceding terms of the verse. *Transgress* is literally "overpass," the Greek word not being elsewhere found in the New Testament. Compare the Septuagint, Jer. 5:22, "which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, . . . that it cannot pass (literally, *overpass*) it." The word ( $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omega\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ ), rendered in the Common Version 'defraud,' in the Revision, *wrong*, properly means "to get or seek more" (than one's share), "to enrich one's self at the expense of another." This is its signification in 2 Cor. 12:17, 18, where it is translated "take advantage of"; similarly, 2 Cor. 2:11: "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan." Its corresponding noun is usually rendered "covetousness" in the New Testament, but may denote selfish grasping, insatiate desire of any sort. 'His brother' denotes, as below in ver. 10, a fellow-believer. No emphasis, however, belongs on this part of the sentence, as if the Thessalonians were only forbidden to wrong Christians in the manner referred to. As to the phrase 'In the matter' (see Revised Version), the observations just made on the verbs "transgress" and "wrong" go to show that it is susceptible of two explanations:

(1) *The matter just referred to*, of sexual purity. So the phrase was understood by Chrysostom, Theodore, Theophylact; among the moderns by Bengel, Ellicott, Alford, Vaughan, Lillie, and others; the Revision also evidently favors this explanation. It is thus viewed as specifically forbidding adultery. Chrysostom says: "For to each man God has assigned a wife, and has set bounds to nature, allowing intercourse with but one only; therefore intercourse with another is transgression and robbery, and the taking of more than belongs to one; or, rather, it is more cruel than any robbery; for we grieve not so much when our riches are carried off, as when marriage is invaded."

(2) The second class of interpreters take it to mean: *in your business dealings with brethren*. Lünemann: "in the business (now or at any time in hand)"; Winer ("Grammar,"

page 143): "in business (in business affairs)." Similarly (either to Lünemann or to Winer), De Wette, Rigggenbach, and others. Thus taken, the words contain a precept against covetousness and selfish dealing. But "in business" is nowhere else the meaning of the phrase found in the original, and hence, in the face of the context, it is difficult to accept this definition. Lünemann, it may be added, takes the words as co-ordinate, instead of appositive, with "your sanctification"; he takes Paul as declaring this to be God's will: 1. Your sanctification. 2. That you be not covetous toward your brethren.

According to (2) of the above interpretations, "all these things," in the next clause, would refer to the two classes of sins, covetousness and unchastity; while in ver. 7 "uncleanness" would be used in the broad sense of moral impurity generally.

In favor of (2) are the following considerations:

1. The meaning of the verb ( $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omega\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ ) translated in Revised Version to "wrong." It describes the grasping spirit, taking advantage of another, in order to get gain. Its noun ( $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omega\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ) is usually rendered "covetousness" in the Revision; in 2 Cor. 9:5, "extortion"; in Eph. 4:19, "greediness"; in Mark 7:22 (plural), "covetings."

2. The article prefixed to the infinitive seems slightly to mark off this clause as a separate topic.

3. Fornication and covetousness are in other New Testament passages found in similar juxtaposition. See Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5; Heb. 13:4, 5.

4. Negatively—that on the other explanation the apostle forbids adultery on grounds that are ethically almost the lowest; namely, that it is taking to one's self what belongs to the husband, seeking one's own pleasure at the expense of a brother. The prohibition, thus understood, emphasizes the selfishness of the sin, and that not as against the partner in the crime herself or society at large, but against the husband.

The contextual evidence, it will be seen, is somewhat evenly balanced. But the absence of positive linguistic evidence in favor of interpretation (2) decides against it, and compels us to adopt (1), making the matter refer to sexual purity. It must, however, be borne in mind

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

7 fied. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you.

that the force of the argument in its favor may be due to our ignorance of Greek linguistic usage in that period, or in that region; 'wrong in the matter' (*πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι*) may conceivably have been a phrase of the time, denoting sharp practice in a business transaction—getting the upper hand in one's dealings. A single instance of such usage once discovered would at once turn the scale in favor of the rendering adopted by Winer, Buttmann, and Lünemann, which is also substantially that of the Common Version.

**Because that the Lord is the avenger of such.** The Revised Version gives, *is an avenger in all these things*. See the same warning in Eph. 5:6: "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." Bitter as is the fruit of this class of sins, blasting human hope and happiness as do no other—

"I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
The hazard o' concealing;  
But och! it hardens a' within,  
An' petrifies the feeling!"  
—Burns' "Epistle to a Young Friend."

—it is nevertheless not to their immediate retributive effects that Paul refers, but to a coming vengeance. A just God, and a judgment day—these are the eternal facts with which we are to rouse and reinforce our consciences amid temptation. "All these things," if the interpretation we have adopted above be the true one, refers particularly to the different forms of carnal impurity. **As we also have forewarned you and testified**—told you beforehand, that is, in advance of God's day of vengeance; this seems to be the true sense of the first part of the compound (*προειπαμεν*) as also in 3:4, above, where the same word is used. The marginal rendering of the Revisers "told you plainly" has little to recommend it. 'Testified': "bore my earnest testimony"; the original is a strong word denoting earnest assertion, solemn protest. See Acts 20:26; 1 Tim. 5:21; 2 Tim. 4:1.

Here, as elsewhere, Paul's letters are the echo of his previous faithful preaching. See 3:4 and 2:1-12. Some six years after this letter was written he utters the same earnest protest

in the ear of Felix, reasoning "of righteousness, of *temperance* (self-control), and the *judgment to come*."

**7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, etc.** Returning to the starting point of ver. 3—the purpose of God. **Unto uncleanness.** The noun, probably for the reasons given above, is to be taken in its specific sense of carnal impurity rather than of moral impurity in general. **Unto (or, in) holiness** (*sanctification*). The broad contrast between the two being chiefly intended, no especial stress is to be laid on the change of preposition—"in" as distinguished from "for." Paul's use of the phrase here is doubtless partly determined by his preference for it in other connections. See ver. 4 above; 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:15. Compare Rom. 6:19, 22.

**8. He, therefore, that despiseth** is to be closely connected with the preceding verse, and through that with ver. 3; it is a practical *ad hominem* application of the solemn declaration of the will of God. The verb 'despiseth,' or 'rejecteth,' has reference to the commands just given; "rejecteth our commands," set them aside, disregards them. **Not man, but God.** Do not think how you can justify yourselves to us; it is no human authority that you will impugn and challenge by disobedience, but that of God himself. A reminder of what is much insisted on in these epistles, that the apostles were not the bearers of their own or any human message, but of a direct revelation from God—**Who hath also given unto us (you) his Holy Spirit.** A climax to his exhortation similar to that in 2:12. How inexcusable, how aggravated would be any disregard of his commands, considering that you have received the Holy Spirit, who enlightens your minds, is purifying your hearts through his truth, and is bestowing an inner energy by which you may do the divine will.

On the subject of this section Jowett says, in his detached note on the "Evils in the Church in the Apostolic Age": "Licentiousness was the besetting sin of the Roman world. Except by a miracle it was impossible that the new converts could be at once and wholly

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

freed from it. It lingered in the flesh when the spirit had cast it off. It had interwoven itself in the Pagan religions, and, if we may believe the writings of adversaries, was ever reappearing on the confines of the church in the earliest heresies. It was possible for men 'to resist unto death, striving against sin,' yet to fall beneath its power. Even within the pale of the church, it might assume the form of a mystic Christianity. The very ecstasy of conversion would often lead to a reaction. Nothing is more natural than that in a licentious city, like Corinth or Ephesus, those who were impressed by St. Paul's teaching should have gone their way, and returned to their former life. In this case it would seldom happen that they apostatized into the ranks of the heathen: the same impulse that led them to the gospel, would lead them also to bridge the gulf which separated them from its purer morality. Many may have sinned and repented again and again, unable to stand themselves in the general corruption, yet unable to cast aside utterly the image of innocence and goodness which the apostle had set before them. There were those, again, who consciously sought to lead the double life, and imagined themselves to have found in licentiousness the true freedom of the gospel."

"It is a new, and hitherto unheard of language, in which the apostle denounces sins of impurity. They are not moral evils, but spiritual. They corrupt the soul; they defile the temple of the Holy Ghost; they cut men off from the body of Christ."

"All sin is spoken of in the epistles of St. Paul as rooted in human nature and quickened by the consciousness of law; but especially is this the case with the sin which is more than any other the type of sin in general—fornication. It is, in a peculiar sense, the sin of the flesh, with which the very idea of the corruption of the flesh is closely connected, just as, in 1 Thess. 4:3, the idea of holiness is regarded as almost equivalent to abstinence from the commission of it. It is a sin against a man's own body, distinguished from all other sins by its personal and individual nature. No other is at the same time so gross and so insidious; no other partakes so much

of the slavery of sin. As marriage is the type of the communion of Christ and his church, as the body is the member of Christ, so the sin of fornication is a strange and mysterious union with evil."

*Concerning Brotherly Love and Other Duties.* (9-12.)

**9. But as touching brotherly love**—a topic much dwelt on by Paul, though the word for 'brotherly love' (*φιλαδελφία*) is elsewhere found in his epistles only in Rom. 12:10; it also occurs in Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7. **Ye have no need that I (one) write unto you**—the language of courtesy and true Christian tact, quick to recognize the basis of good in those whom it exhorts. Compare 5:1; 2 Cor. 9:1. It was no empty compliment. The testimony of history is ample as to the extraordinary mutual affection that characterized the early churches. "Behold how these Christians love one another!" was the wondering exclamation of unbelievers and enemies. It was thus in Jerusalem: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul." (Acts 4:32.) The testimony of Lucian, the Voltaire of the second century, who lived for many years in Antioch, is emphatic on this point. Though an undisguised enemy of Christianity, he bears witness to the generous beneficence of the Christians toward one another. "They give lavishly all that they have . . . For their first lawgiver has persuaded them that they are all brothers." ("Concerning the Death of Peregrinus," chap. 13.) The new life in Christ began at once to bear fruit in works of love and charity. Uhrlhorn has freshly illustrated this subject in his "Christian Charity in the Ancient World" (English translation, New York, 1883), and has brought together much valuable historical material. Compare particularly the chapter "A World Without Love," and the contrast there drawn between Pagan *liberality* and Christian *charity*. **For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another**—you know the paramount obligation of this duty without instruction from us; the Holy Spirit himself teaches you this. Compare 1 John 2:27, "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any

**10** And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

**11** And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

**10** taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands,

1 Gr. be ambitious.

one teach you." The whole of this Epistle indeed is a commentary on Christ's new commandment, to love one another.

**10. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia.** This implies, as remarked by Rickenbach, "a lively intercourse with the Christians in Philippi, Berea, and perhaps at small scattered stations, offshoots from the central churches." Their poverty, and the environment of persecution, had operated, in a very short time, to develop their sympathy and active beneficence.

**But we exhort you, brethren, that ye increase (or, abound) more and more.** On 'abound,' see note on ver. 1 above. Paul's letters everywhere reveal the intensest solicitude that this grace of love one to another might flourish; it was vital to the welfare of the church. Chrysostom remarks on another passage: "If we confine to one or two the love which ought to be extended to the whole church of God, we injure both ourselves and them and the whole." The following extract, part of the religious experience of Adoniram Judson during the last years of his life, is itself a commentary on this passage; it is taken from one of Mrs. Judson's letters (Wayland, "Life of Judson," Vol. II., p. 338): "Another subject which occupied a large share of his attention, was that of brotherly love. You are perhaps aware that, like all persons of his ardent temperament, he was subject to strong attachments and aversions, which he sometimes had difficulty in bringing under the controlling influence of divine grace. He remarked that he had always felt more or less of an affectionate interest in his brethren, as brethren, and some of them he had loved very dearly for their personal qualities; but he was now aware that he had never placed his standard of love high enough. He spoke of them as children of God redeemed by the Saviour's blood, watched over and guarded by his love, dear to his heart, honored by him in the election, and to be honored hereafter before the assembled universe; and he said it was not sufficient to be kind and obliging to such,

to abstain from evil speaking, and make a general mention of them in our prayers; but our attachment to them should be of the most ardent and exalted character: it would be so in heaven, and we lost immeasurably by not beginning now. 'As I have loved you, so ought ye also to love one another,' was a precept continually in his mind; and he would often murmur, as though unconsciously, 'As I have loved you, as I have loved you'; then burst out with the exclamation, 'Oh, the love of Christ! the love of Christ!'"

**11, 12.** In the same breath Paul sends admonition on several points, regarding which there evidently was 'need that one write' unto them. He enjoins to lead a quiet, orderly life,—to mind their own business,—to be industrious in their daily labor. These admonitions, though so briefly thrown off (forming, apparently, a mere *addendum* to a more important exhortation) were especially required by the existing circumstances of the Thessalonian Church. This is manifest from their emphatic repetition in the next epistle. See 2 Thess. 3: 6-15. **And that ye study.** For 'study' the margin has "be ambitious." They were zealously to aspire and strive—after what? First, **to be quiet.** It is evident from this and from what immediately follows, that the Thessalonian Christians were in danger of being diverted from the ordinary duties of life. Expecting the speedy end of the world, that the hour of their deliverance was drawing nigh, they were becoming restless and impatient. Perhaps, already influenced by false prophets and teachers (see 2 Thess. 2: 2), they were neglecting to watch in the spirit enjoined by Christ. They were ceasing to "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him," and to work out their salvation "with fear and trembling." This excitement would foster idleness, spiritual dissipation, and also incline them to meddle with matters beyond their proper sphere, whether those of the church at large or the private concerns of their brethren. Hence, first of all, the apostle admonishes to *quietness*, not to *sleep*,—that is,

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that ye may have lack of nothing.*

12 even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

spiritual indifference, or torpor,—but to a quiet, orderly (compare the “honestly” in ver. 12) Christian life.

Secondly, **to do your own business.** See 2 Thess. 3:11, “For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, *but are busybodies;* also 1 Peter 4:15, “For let none of you suffer . . . as a meddler in other men’s matters.” “Mind your own business” is a precept or rebuke of Scriptural authority, and of large legitimate application. It may be misapplied, however, and especially to excuse indifference to the spiritual welfare of our neighbors. Lünemann’s comment on this verse perhaps opens the way for such misapplication. He infers that Paul had in mind the “unauthorized zeal” of some who “had used the advent as a means of terror, in order to draw before their tribunal what was a matter of individual conscience,” and in this zeal had assumed a care for the salvation of their neighbors “with an objectionable curiosity.” This view of the case is hardly to be derived from the passage itself.

Thirdly, **to work with your own hands.** The daily labor of most of the members, that by which they earned their livelihood, was doubtless manual labor. In orderly industry from day to day—thus they would best obey the precept, “Watch!”; thus employed, they would rightly be waiting their Lord’s coming. Paul could point to his own example: “We toil, working with our own hands.” (1 Cor. 4:12.) Compare Rom. 12:11, Revised Version, “In diligence not slothful; fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.” Christ himself had set this example, and, as the carpenter of Nazareth, had sanctified hand labor, which, among the Greeks and Romans, was held in great contempt. Apart from the special reasons mentioned in the next verse, which apply to us as well as to Paul’s readers, it is not to be forgotten how great a safeguard against manifold temptations habits of daily industry have always been found. See further notes on 2 Thess. 3:10.

**12. That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without.** ‘Honestly’ (rendered “decently” in 1 Cor. 14:40), in a becoming, honorable manner; the opposite of

“disorderly” in 2 Thess. 3:6. ‘Them that are without,’ including all unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile. The honor of Christ and his cause was at stake in this matter. Compare Col. 4:5, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” In Eph. 4:28, another motive for one to work with his hands is mentioned—namely, “that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.” **And that ye may have lack of nothing**—that your proper wants may be supplied. In this need are, of course, included the wants of those who are providentially dependent upon us, “But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 5:8.) We have in the present passage a correlate to the precepts of the sermon on the mount, “Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink.” See Matt. 6:25, and others. The Christian is not to dissociate faith and forethought.

The exhortations of the eleventh verse are in close accordance with the Saviour’s teaching concerning the spirit in which his disciples, after his departure, were to await his second coming. He warned them against undue alarm and excitement; there would be need of patient endurance. The parable of the Ten *Minæ*, or Pounds (Luke<sup>19</sup>), was spoken in circumstances analogous to those which occasioned these two epistles—“because they supposed,” says Luke, “that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.” In that, as in the parable of the Talents, he warns against indolence and neglect of one’s outward vocation and work. He enjoins activity, productive labor. The *minæ* were delivered to the servants with the command to “occupy” them—that is (see Revised Version), employ them in trade or business “till I come.”

**4:13-5:11. The Parousia, or Christ’s Second Coming.**—Two particulars of the subject are treated of in this section. The first concerns the resurrection of deceased believers. The Thessalonians were anxious on behalf of their brethren who were passing away, lest their death should deprive them of participation in the glorious events of the Second Ad-

vent—lest they should thereby be prevented from beholding the inaugural glories of the Messianic kingdom. The question thus arose: When in the new order of things will their resurrection occur? To this the apostle makes specific reply, communicating facts made known to him by special revelation. The next question concerned *the time* of the advent: When shall the Parousia take place? In reply to this, the apostle merely repeats the teaching of Christ, and enforces it with appropriate exhortations. In the Second Epistle he adds further instruction upon this point, and communicates facts not found elsewhere in the Scriptures.

The section is one of importance in its eschatological bearings, and requires for its thorough elucidation the closest grammatical analysis of the original, as well as an extended comparison with parallel Scriptures. It is distinctly prophetic and predictive; as has been pointed out in the *Introduction*, Paul's thought in these epistles, more than in any other, dwells upon the future of the church and the world. The principal eschatological passages in the other epistles are the following: Rom. 2: 5-16; 8: 1-39; 1 Cor. 13: 9-12; ch. 15; 2 Cor. 5: 1-10; Col. 3: 3, 4. Before proceeding to the detailed exposition of this section, it may be well to state several general principles and assumptions on which the exposition is based:

(1) *Scripture prophecy, in so far as it predicts the future of the kingdom of God, is organically one.* It constitutes a progressive, germinant unfolding of the divine plan of salvation. Its predictions have been revealed by the Holy Spirit to prophets, from first to last, under substantially the same conditions; the revelation has been through the medium of vision and dream, or by direct word communication. Scripture prophecy is therefore subject throughout to the same general laws of interpretation.

(2) *The language of prophecy is of necessity symbolic.* Typical events, such as the deliverance out of Egypt, contributed largely to the symbolic diction of the prophets. Familiar outward objects and events became representations of spiritual ideas, and of events transcending human experience. Thus "the trumpet of God" denoted some signal, divine, audible call or warning. As remarked by

Wemyss ("Clavis Symbolica," Preface), "the symbolic language of the prophets is almost a science in itself." The interpretation of particular prophecies must therefore recognize and take careful account of the poetic and symbolic imagery common to all prophecy.

(3) *New Testament prophecy also has an organic unity of its own.* Its main theme is the destinies of the people and kingdom of Christ subsequent to the incarnation. Its groundwork is laid in our Lord's teachings, especially the great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 24, 25.) That discourse, though itself needing the key afforded by apostolic exposition and by later revelations to the New Testament prophets, constitutes the proper point of departure, as well as the most certain basis, for the interpretation of the epistles and the Apocalypse.

(4) *Prophetic prediction is not designed to enable the reader to anticipate the external and secular phases of history.* Its geography cannot be traced in advance upon the map; its chronology cannot be adjusted in advance to the standards of human measurement. *Near* and *far* are relative and ethical terms in prophecy. It is addressed not so much to the rational understanding as to the ear of hope and faith. We are not considering here its value as evidence *after* fulfillment. Previous to fulfillment, its mission is for the warning and encouragement of believers, especially in the more trying periods of the church's history; it is then indeed "a lamp shining in a dark place."

(5) *We are to distinguish between the positive teaching of the apostles and their personal hopes and impressions.* From them, as from the Old Testament prophets who predicted the first advent, it was hidden "what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto." (1 Peter 1: 11, Rev. ver.) How carefully, and with what providential skill, they were restrained from erroneous teaching is strikingly illustrated in ver. 15 of the present chapter. Their language could not but be colored by their human expectations, but the *auctor primarius* of their writings preadjusted their language to broader truths and a larger future than they themselves knew.

The postulates briefly laid down in the foregoing paragraphs are assumed once for all as

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep <sup>1</sup> in Jesus will God bring

1 Gr. *through*. Or, *will God through Jesus*.

the basis of the present exposition. It would be aside from the purpose of the commentary to illustrate them at length, or to vindicate them. One other consideration is also to be emphasized; namely, that *the section contains only fragmentary instructions on the subject in hand; it is but supplementary to a much fuller body of oral instruction which he had given them months before*. This appears from 2 Thess. 2:5 and 1 Thess. 5:1. Paul simply deals in the briefest terms with the two points noticed above: (1) the resurrection of deceased believers prior to the Lord's descent upon the earth, and (2) the time when he should thus come. The information given claims to be a revelation from the Lord; when received, does not appear from the letter, but probably long before.

**13-18. The Christian dead—are they to miss the glories of the Lord's coming?**

**13. But I would not have you to be ignorant.** So Paul frequently introduces an important topic or earnest statement; sometimes it is, "I would have you know"; see Rom. 1:13; Phil. 1:12. Here it brings forward with emphasis a subject of immediate interest to his correspondents—of importance to all: the prospect of the Christian dead. The words "that ye sorrow not" show that the Thessalonians were distressed on this matter. "The Thessalonians perhaps had asked a question, or Timothy may have given information respecting their uneasiness about some of their number who had died." (Riggenbach.) **Concerning them which are (or, that fall) asleep**—present tense, denoting what is now or from time to time taking place; those who are from time to time dying. The immediate reference was evidently to members of the Thessalonian Church, but the truth enunciated to meet this case was such as applied to all deceased believers. Ellicott calls attention to the fact that *to fall asleep* is a frequent Scriptural term for *die*, but not peculiar to Scripture. **That ye sorrow not.** Let the message from the Lord which I sent you banish your sorrow; not the natural sorrow over the

loss of loved ones, but the sorrow that is distressed about their future. Such sorrow belongs not to you, but to **others (the rest) which have no hope**. A broad characteristic of all who are not Christ's; they have no hope, no positive, definite hope embracing the future life. Especially true of the Gentiles; see Eph. 2:12: "having no hope, and without God in the world." "The true hopelessness of the old heathen world," says Ellicott, "finds its saddest expression in the *Eumenides* of *Eschylus*":

"Once dead there is no resurrection."

**14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again.** This clause states the premise on which the following conclusion and assurance is based—the great major premise of faith. One is as sure as the other; "as Christ the head died and rose again, even so shall all the members of his body." In the words of Gambold's hymn, which Rowland Hill used often to quote:

"We two are so joined,  
He'll not live in glory, and leave me behind."

See 2 Cor. 4:14. "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus." (1 Cor. 15:20.) "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." **Even so certain** is it that **them also which sleep in Jesus, or, that are fallen asleep**. The words 'them that are fallen asleep' are in Greek an aorist participle with the prefixed article; so also the same expression at the end of ver. 15. Being joined to a future verb, it would be, if rendered with strict grammatical accuracy: "them that shall have fallen asleep"; that is, previous to the time implied in the predicate, when God "shall bring" Jesus and his saints to glory. The proper understanding of this participle will aid in dispelling the confusion and misconception that has gathered about the apostle's words in ver. 15.

"It is noticeable," says Ellicott, "that the apostle here, as always, uses the direct term (*ἀπέθανεν*) [died] in reference to our Lord, to

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

15 with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left unto the <sup>1</sup> coming of the Lord, shall in no wise pre-

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *presence*.

obviate all possible misconception; in reference to the faithful he appropriately uses the consolatory term (*κοιμᾶσθαι*) [fall asleep]. 'In Jesus'—literally, *through Jesus*. The phraseology here, it will be seen, is not precisely the same as in 1 Cor. 15 : 18; "they also which are fallen asleep *in Christ*"; "in Christ" in this latter passage, as also in ver. 16 below, "the dead in Christ," has the preposition 'in' (*ἐν*); here it is "through" (*διὰ*). But what is it to have 'fallen asleep through Jesus'? They have died *trusting in Jesus—in the faith of Jesus*; "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust" in him, they have lain down to the sleep of death. This is the sense suggested by Chrysostom and Theophylact among the Greek Fathers; it is preferred by Riggénbach, and by Webster and Wilkinson in their Greek Testament. It must be admitted that there is no precisely analogous ease of the preposition being used in this large meaning—a meaning nearly equivalent to the Greek for 'in' (*ἐν*), and therefore Elliecott and many others interpret: "those who, through his mediation, are now rightly accounted as sleeping." Still others, and perhaps the majority, reject the above construction and read with the Revisers' margin: "will God through Jesus bring with him," thus attaching the phrase to the principal verb of the sentence. But the order of the words in the original seems rather to favor the former construction; moreover, the context requires some such qualifying phrase, either in thought or expressed, to the words 'them that are fallen asleep.' Compare ver. 16 below and the passage from 1 Corinthians previously cited. With our present knowledge of Greek usage a clear decision can hardly be reached, but in my judgment the construction and interpretation first given are to be preferred. **Will God bring with him—** 'bring,' literally *lead*, will not only raise them from the dead, but add them to the triumphal procession of the advancing King. The same word is appropriately used in Heb. 2 : 10: "For it became him . . . in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author [captain] of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

**15. By (literally *in*) the word of the Lord**—the precise phrase employed in the Septuagint (1 Kings 20 : 35) to denote a prophetic communication. The following statements (contained in 15-18) are manifestly presented as authorized by, and proceeding directly from, our Lord. But was it a communication made to his disciples previous to the ascension, or to Paul himself subsequently? If the former, it must be from some unrecorded discourse, since no passage in the gospels furnishes the facts here stated. One of Jesus' sayings is preserved in the New Testament outside of the gospel history—in Acts 20 : 35; others that rest only on the authority of later tradition are given in Appendix C to Westcott's "Introduction to the Study of the Gospels." To some such discourse of Christ, of which no record has been made by the gospel writers, Calvin supposes the apostle to refer. But the present passage contains a definite, positive prediction concerning future events, adapted to meet an inquiry peculiar to this church and this juncture; in the absence of any intimation that our Lord had communicated special teaching on this point, we are certainly warranted in understanding it to have been *an express revelation made to Paul himself, or to his companions; Silas, it will be remembered, was a prophet.* (Acts 15 : 32.) That Paul did from the beginning of his ministry receive special communications from Christ, one can scarcely doubt who accepts the historical trustworthiness of the book of Acts (see Acts 9 : 5, seq.; 22 : 17-21) or of the epistles (see Gal. 1 : 12; 2 : 2; also 1 Cor. 11 : 23). 'In the word of the Lord' is thus understood by Chrysostom, De Wette, Riggénbach, Lüemann, Alford, Elliecott, and others.

The difficulty which the apostle now proceeds to remove from the minds of his readers was not a doubt concerning the certainty or reality of the resurrection, or concerning the blissful future of those believers who should be dead before the Lord's coming, but concerning their participation in the glories of that coming. "The idea that perplexed and distressed the Thessalonians seems to have been

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

16 cede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout,

something of this sort; that when the Lord came, their deceased friends would be found to have suffered serious loss, in that, while they would ultimately, no doubt, be raised again, they would yet have no part in the joy of welcoming him back to his inheritance of the redeemed earth, and in the triumphant inauguration of his reign. The songs of the living saints would mingle with the acclamations of angels, as, clad in 'the visible robes of his imperial majesty,' the Saviour-King took his seat on his blood-bought throne. But what if in the rapture of that hour, and for ages after, the lowly tenants of the tombs should be forgotten alike by all, and no beam from the crown of Jesus—no thrill of ecstasy of the new creation should reach death's dark domain? Would not this be for the time, and so long as it lasted, all one as if 'they also which had fallen asleep in Christ were perished'? Certainly by a church so full of the bright prospect of Christ's coming kingdom, as was this of Thessalonica, it could not be regarded as any common calamity. It was just as if, on the very eve of the day of the expected return of some long-absent father, a cruel fate should single out one fond, expectant child, and hurry him to a far distant and inhospitable shore." (Lillie, pp. 247, 248.)

**We which are alive, and remain (or, are left) unto the coming of the Lord.** To reproduce the original more nearly: 'We, the living, the survivors at the coming of the Lord.' The first inquiry is, who are included in the apostle's 'we'? Plainly, all other believers than the class named at the end of the verse; namely, those who have already or shall have fallen asleep before the Advent. This is clear from the context; compare the note on the phrase as it first occurs in ver. 14. But any possible misunderstanding of the apostle's language is obviated by the limiting phrases appended to the 'we.' In the Greek they are present participles having the force of relative clauses (*οἱ ζῶντες, οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν*), and, according to well-known Greek usage, refer to future time, as does the predicate to which they are joined; the sense of the original, therefore, is: 'we who shall be alive—who shall be left unto the coming of the Lord.' Thus the scope of the 'we' (so far as

the apostle's thought is concerned) is precisely determined. It includes 'the living,' but lest this phrase should occasion misunderstanding, a restrictive qualification is immediately added: those 'who shall be left,' etc. But the question arises, Does not Paul necessarily include *himself* (as well as some of his readers) in this first personal pronoun? Yes, if *he or they prove to be* of the number expressly named 'who shall be left' at the Lord's Coming. A careful analysis of the original will show the error of those who assert with Jowett that the apostle "says that men living in his own day will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air"; or with Lünenmann, that "Paul here includes himself along with the Thessalonians among those who will be alive at the advent of Christ." 'The coming of the Lord' means here, as elsewhere in these two epistles, his *Second Coming*; namely, (in its highest and final sense) his visible return from heaven to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and to establish in its eternal glory the kingdom of God.

**Shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep**—shall not be before them in meeting the coming King; he explains more definitely in the next two verses. "Precede" in the Revision properly translates the archaic "prevent" of the Common Version, the latter having the same meaning in Jeremy Taylor, for example: "Your messenger prevented mine but an hour."

**16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.** 'Himself'—that is, in his own person. "This Jesus," said the angels to the disciples on the Mount of Ascension, "shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." Or, the emphatic pronoun may be designed to turn our thoughts to Christ as the central figure of the scene.

**Shall descend from heaven with a shout.** His approach will thus be signaled with 'a shout,' a loud word of command. No silent unobserved coming, but heard far before. In Luke 17: 20, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," the reference is not as here to the "great day." The *signal shout* will not necessarily be the voice of the Lord himself, as the English rendering might seem to imply (literally, "in a shout," or "in shout-

the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

ing"), but will be one of the attendant circumstances of his coming. The term properly denotes a word of command, as to a ship's crew, for example, or a band of soldiers. In the following words we have not additional circumstances (the omission of a conjunction shows the next two phrases to be not co-ordinate with the first, but rather in apposition with it), but a description of this signal shout. It shall be **with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God**—or, better, adhering more nearly to the original, "*with voice of archangel and with trumpet of God.*" Who this archangel is—whether, indeed, in the heavenly host there is more than one so styled—belongs to the unrevealed lore of heaven; in Jude 9 we are told of "Michael the archangel," and some suppose Michael to be designated here; Olshausen considers the archangel to be Christ himself. The 'trumpet of God' is the trumpet belonging to God, or "used in his service." Such a trumpet was heard from the heights of Sinai. Exod. 19: 16: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and *the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud*"; ver. 19: "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." In 1 Cor. 15: 51, 52, Paul reaffirms the present statement: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound*, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

This signal shout will not only announce to the living their Lord's approach, but will be a resurrection call; it will summon the dead from their tombs. See John 5: 28, 29. So the third stanza of the *Dies Irae*:

"The last loud trumpet's wondrous sound  
Shall through the rending tombs rebound,  
And wake the nations underground."

—*Roscommon's Translation.*

The actual, audible phenomena here predicted in, the terms "shout," "trumpet," a discreet exegesis will not attempt to define. "The sound of a trumpet," says Fairbairn,

with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump

"is employed in the Scriptures as a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God" ("Typology," II., p. 452); see Isa. 27: 13. Olshausen needlessly restricts it: "The term is chosen to designate the *mighty influence which will penetrate the universe*, and which will be connected with Christ's appearance," etc. The language is undoubtedly symbolic; Paul is not giving details in the literal style of a chronicler; yet by a single stroke he lifts the whole transaction out of and above the plane of human events and natural causes, at the same time assisting the imagination, and elevating our conceptions of the transcendently sublime event. The signal shout to announce the coming King of the Redeemed is from no human voice, no earthly trumpet; an archangel's voice shall sound it, a "trumpet of God" shall blazon it abroad. As it is declared elsewhere that "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1: 7), so likewise every ear shall hear him; there shall be an audible call, that shall be heard by the living and shall awaken the dead. Compare John 5: 28, 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment."

**The dead in Christ**—same as "those who have fallen asleep through Jesus," in ver. 14. The **dead in Christ** are those who *when alive* were in Christ. These **shall rise first**—that is, previously to the ascension into the air of the living saints. 'First' and 'then' (in the next verse) belong together as *first in order*, and *next in order*. There is apparently no reference, to a first as distinguished from a second *resurrection*—a distinction which is entirely foreign to the apostle's present purpose, and to which as little regard is paid in the passage cited above from 1 Cor. 15. The latter is properly a parallel passage to the one before us, only that in this he is concerned not so much to assert the resurrection hope of the believer, as to assure him that in case of death before the Advent he will not fail to participate in its inaugural triumph. The passage in Rev. 20: 1-10 is not, in my judgment, a proper parallel to this.

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

17 of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive, who are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

## CHAPTER V.

BUT of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1 Or, exhort.

17. **Then**—that is, next afterward. Whether immediately after is not said; it is, however, the second scene in the drama here described. **Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.** ‘Together with them’ is the important point; the risen dead and the living shall meet and join company. ‘Caught up’; compare 2 Cor. 12: 2. “I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago . . . caught up to the third heaven.” ‘In clouds’ (the Greek omits the article); so wrapt in clouds, Christ ascended. (Acts 1: 9.) **To meet the Lord in the air**—that is, rising *into the air* to meet the Lord. Most commentators explain the words ‘in the air’ or ‘into the air’ as belonging properly to ‘caught up.’ But Greek usage will equally allow the phrase where our translators (also the Revisers) have placed it, after the verbal noun rendered ‘to meet.’ The saints then living, with glorified bodies (“changed,” 1 Cor. 15: 52), shall be gathered together by the angels (Matt. 24: 31); with them shall also be the risen saints; all together shall ascend from the earth’s surface to join the celestial host—our Lord accompanied by his angels. Here Paul’s apocalypse to the Thessalonians (so far as concerns the events of the Parousia) breaks off, adding only the glorious assurance, **and so**—that is, these things being so—**shall we ever be with the Lord.** John 14: 3: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; *that where I am there ye may be also.*” See also John 17: 24. Forever with the Lord—the Christian’s immortality—the eternal life of his hope and his inheritance.

“The Life that hath no ending,  
But lasteth evermore.”

—“The Celestial Country.”

18. **Wherefore comfort one another with these words.** As you stand by the bed of death, and for the last time on earth look into a dear face; as you clasp hands for the

last farewell, let these assurances comfort your hearts; speak them to one another. And when you stand over the graves of your dead, do not sorrow as those who have no hope, but encourage each other with what I have written. When the Lord comes we shall meet one another again, and we shall meet *him*, and we shall be with him in glory forever.

Of other facts concerning the Second Advent, elsewhere revealed in the Scriptures, we have here no word: the transformation of the living, the resurrection of the wicked, the holding of the last judgment, the destroying of the Man of Sin, and the punishment of the enemies of God, the purification of the earth and the final consummation of all things. Nor are we told concerning the state of the dead immediately after death. In the next epistle some additional facts are given, but Paul here and elsewhere states only enough to meet the necessities of the actual experience of his readers at the time.

**Ch. 5 : 1-11.** The apostle now anticipates another question, and in answering it turns quickly and with graceful courtesy to urge the claims and duties of the hour. “When shall these things be,” do you ask? This question was certain to be asked—the very question put by the disciples to Christ as he sat on the sunset slope of the Mount of Olives, after he had gone out from the temple for the last time before his crucifixion. The same inquiry in substance recurs after the resurrection: Acts 1: 6: “Wilt thou *at this time* restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Paul’s answer here is an echo of our Lord’s replies on the occasions above named, and of his teachings elsewhere. First glancing at the fact that the eras and epochs of the great consummation are not revealed, he then enforces the practical precept springing from the fact: namely, Watch and be sober.

**1. The times and the seasons**—that is, of

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman

the events belonging to the Parousia—the Lord's Coming. The word rendered 'seasons' ordinarily denotes a definite limited period of time. Christ uses the same words in his reply to the question above mentioned, Acts 1:7: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power"—that is, as Vaughan paraphrases: "It is not for you to know the *time* that will elapse before my kingdom will be established, nor the season in which it will be established." **Ye have no need.** Why? The next verse answers, and the answer should still suffice for us. Biblical interpretation transcends its function when it sets about forecasting the calendar of the future. More than that which you already know, says the apostle, you do not need to know. The Saviour's admonition and the apostle's hint have been alike lost upon some of the wisest and best among Christians and Biblical scholars; witness, for instance, Bengal, who predicted that Christ's millennial reign would begin in the year 1836.

**2. For yourselves know perfectly.** You know just how the case stands; you are already perfectly well informed as to this matter. **The day of the Lord**—the day when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come as above described. The term can have no other meaning in the present connection; see 2 Thess. 2:1, 2, where "the coming of the Lord" and "the day of the Lord" are plainly interchangeable. The term itself belongs to the language of Old Testament prophecy, and there has a wider signification. See Crémer, "Biblico-Theological Lexicon," pp. 275, 276. In the New Testament it refers specifically to *Messianic* manifestations. **Cometh as a thief in the night**—'cometh,' shall come, a prophetic present, the future sense similar to "send" in Mark 1:2. 'As a thief' is a familiar Old Testament comparison. Christ says (Matt. 24:42, 43): "Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not

have suffered his house to be broken through." So 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief." The point of comparison is its *unexpectedness*. That it will be *terrible* also is suggested afterward, but does not lie in the comparison itself, either here or in Rev. 16:15: "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth," etc. Chrysostom adds: "On this account he so cometh as a thief in the night, that we may not abandon ourselves to wickedness, nor to sloth, that he may not take from us our reward." Lillie: "You will notice the stealthiness of that approach. It is always thus spoken of in Scripture, as a surprise and sudden catastrophe. It is compared to the breaking forth of the deluge; to the rain of fire on Sodom and Gomorrah; to the unannounced return of a householder to his servants; to a cry at midnight; to the falling of a snare on an unwary bird; to the lightning's flash. But the image most frequently employed is the one before us—the coming of a thief in the night, unheralded, unlooked for, unthought of, at the time when deep sleep falleth on men."

**3. When they shall say (or, are saying)—** when the language of men's hearts is: We are secure and prosperous. The language, not of all, but of the careless and unbelieving; so the rest of the verse implies. And compare Matt. 24:38, 39. **Then sudden destruction.** The original is more vivid and emphatic, something like this: *Then, suddenly is destruction upon them.* See 2 Thess. 1:9. **As travail upon a woman with child**—an image of sudden, inevitable, dreaded anguish. Frequent in the writings of Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets (Isa. 13:6, 8), predicting the destruction of Babylon: "Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. . . . And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them: they shall be in pain as a woman that travileth." **And they shall not (or, in no wise) escape.** Compare 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Heb. 2:3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do others*; but let us watch and be sober.

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read *as thieves*.

**4. But ye**—distinguished from the general subject of the preceding verse—**are not in darkness**,—that is, the season for thieves to come,—**that that day should overtake you as a thief**. You are not in such a moral condition (of ignorance, unbelief, and hardness of heart) as that the sudden dawning of the great day should find you unprepared, off your guard. The clause introduced by ‘that’ (*ινα*) is one of result, denoting not an *actual*, but a *conceived* result or consequence. Commentators who make the conjunction mean *in order that*, and explain the design as referring to God (Lünenmann, for instance) simply do violence to the Greek and en timber the simple sense of the apostle’s words. ‘That day,’ literally ‘*the day*’ the day of the Lord just spoken of.

**5. For ye are all the children (sons) of light, and children (sons) of the day.** The mention of the thief, who comes *by night*, suggests to the apostle, as suitable for the following exhortations, this text; namely, the significant fact: “You are sons of light—day.” Why the second form of the figure, we shall see in considering its practical application. “Son of,” in the Hebrew way of speaking, describes one’s nature; thus “son of peace” (Luke 10:6); “son of wisdom”; “of destruction”; this latter pointing to one’s destiny. Barnabas is called (Acts 4:36) “son of consolation” (or *exhortation*). The phrase sets forth some typical feature of the person, ordinarily his character or actions. ‘Light’ and ‘day’ are employed in one of the rich ethical senses that belong to their symbolical use in Scripture, especially in the writings of John. The conception in the present passage is the same as in 2 Cor. 6:14: “For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?” Eph. 5:8, Rev. Ver.: “For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” **We are not of the night, nor of darkness**—the precise obverse of the previous statement, only that the apostle changes from ‘you’ to ‘we,’ and drops the Hebraism. Just

4 with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you <sup>1</sup>as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

as ‘light’ stands for God’s moral character, particularly as exhibited in his truth and righteousness, so ‘darkness’ for iniquity, that moral condition whose “unfruitful works” Paul denounces farther on in the passage just cited from Ephesians.

**6. Therefore let us not sleep.** If sons of *light*, all our time is *day-time*, and we have no business to be sleeping, *as do others*, unbelievers, as in 4:13, above. In such points as this, what *they do*, *we* are not to do. **Let us watch and be sober**—the chief ethical corollary—always so in the Scriptures—of the doctrine of the Parousia. A broad maxim of Christian duty, summing up in itself the temper and attitude appropriate to the life of faith. The maxim rests fundamentally on the facts of the Parousia; it has in view the responsibilities connected with the Monarch’s approach, an approach at any time possible; “Watch therefore, for you know not on what day your Lord cometh.” (Matt. 24:42; similarly Mark 13:35.) Other considerations also enforce it, such as the danger from unseen and wily spiritual foes, the tendencies of our carnal nature, the constant liability to death; but the one consideration made most prominent in the Scriptures is that first referred to, our Lord’s desire to find ready at his coming a prepared people.

The precept is twofold: 1. ‘Watch’ (literally, *be wakeful*) is the figure that enjoins unremitting Christian readiness. We are to be spiritually open-eyed, keeping an unslumbering sense for things divine. Faith will sing: “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Sol. Song 5:2), or with a modern poet:

“Great King, we await thee! From watch-towers of prayer

Expectant we gaze through the sin-troubled air.”

2. ‘Be sober,’ that is, “free from the stupefying effects of self-indulgence and sin.” So our Lord, Luke 21:34: “But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, as a snare.”

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

1 Or, *watch*.

**7. For they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that be drunken, etc.** If you do not mean to be wakeful, but to sleep, or if, on the other hand, you do not mean to be sober, but to give yourselves to drinking and revelry, then *night* is the time for it, as all men know. But your time is not night; you belong to a different time—you are of a wholly different nature. The words ‘sleep’ and ‘drunken’ are in this verse evidently to be taken in their literal sense, the reference being to existing customs.

8. This verse repeats the argument and exhortation of ver. 6, then adds: **putting on the breastplate of faith and love, etc.** It is now a soldierly watchfulness that is enjoined; so also Rom. 13:12: “The night is far spent and the day is at hand; . . . let us put on the armour of light.” The Christian is to be constantly in readiness to defend himself against the foes of his soul and of the gospel. Paul’s piety was in a marked degree of the agonistic type. It is to be remembered, also, that in ancient times all male citizens capable of bearing weapons were trained to arms. He could scarcely fail to think of the Christian graces under the figure of soldierly equipments, even had Isa. 59:17 not suggested it to him. In this earliest passage he names only two pieces of spiritual armor; for the fullest description, see Eph. 6:13-17. Compare Howson’s “Metaphors of St. Paul,” Chap. I., “Roman Soldiers.” The main piece, the ‘breastplate,’ is made ‘of faith and love.’ Is thine a believing and loving heart, O Christian? it is clad in mail of sure proof. The **helmet** is of hope, the **hope of salvation**. In the list of pieces mentioned in Ephesians the breastplate is of “righteousness” and the helmet of “salvation.” Our present passage serves to define the terms there used. Observe that the helmet of the ancient soldier was the brightest and most conspicuous part of his armor.

**9, 10. For God hath not appointed us**

7 rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

**to wrath, but, etc.** This hope of which I speak is “both sure and steadfast,” for God appointed us to be saved; this seems to be the course of the apostle’s thought as shown in the Revised Version: “For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation.” The emphasis in reading should be not on ‘us,’ but on the antithesis of wrath and salvation; we are not to suffer his wrath as “by nature” (Eph. 2:2) we should have done, but to obtain salvation—deliverance from wrath; this salvation is already potentially an accomplished fact, it being obtained by (through) our Lord Jesus Christ. In closing, the apostle reverts to the same conclusion as was reached in the preceding paragraph, repeating the animating assurance that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord’s, and shall at last meet in his presence to go out no more forever.

**10. Who died for us**—‘for,’ that is, for our advantage, on our behalf. The same preposition is found in Matt. 26:28: “My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto the remission of sins.” When the sense is died “in our stead,” another preposition is used (*ἀντί*), as in Matt. 20:28. **That whether we wake or sleep**—whether at his coming we be among the living or the dead. ‘Wake’ is the word rendered ‘watch’ in ver. 6 above, and in the margin of this verse the Revisers have given it as an alternative rendering. But it can scarcely be questioned that the figurative sense of the words ‘wake’ and ‘sleep,’ signifying *live* and *die* (certainly not the ethical sense of *spiritual* waking and sleeping), is that which here belongs to them. If Paul had used the ordinary words, the sentence would have read: “That whether we be living or dead, we should live together with him”—an awkward repetition of the same word in a different sense, and liable to suggest an antithesis foreign to his purpose. It thus happens that the word ‘sleep’ is used in this paragraph in three senses: in ver. 7 of literal

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 11 Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do.

1 Or, comfort.

sleep; in ver. 6 of moral or spiritual sleep; and in the present clause figuratively for death. Rom. 14:8 in its general meaning is a parallel passage: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." On the double preposition 'together with,' which according to many interpreters means "at the same time with," the same remarks apply as in 4:17, above.

**11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together** (or, *one another*). The word 'comfort' seems preferable here to 'exhort,' of the Revised Version, as the verse stands in the closest parallelism with ver. 18 above. The strain of admonitory exhortation has glided over into one of encouraging exhortation—a closing refrain of comfort and bracing hope. **And edify one another** (or, *build each other up*). "Paul considers the Christian church, as also the individual Christian, as a holy building, a holy temple of God which is in the course of construction." (Lüemann.) So Peter also (1 Peter 2:4,5), "unto whom coming as unto a living stone, . . . ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house," etc. The word here rendered 'build up' (*εικοδομεῖν*) usually appears in the Common Version as 'edify,' a translation to which the Revisers have in most cases adhered, the instance in the present verse being an inconsistent exception. The verb and its corresponding noun (in English, *edification*) occur in their figurative sense more than twenty-five times in the New Testament, and usually in Paul's writings. "With him it is always," says Howson, "a social word, having regard to the mutual improvement of members of the church and the growth of the whole body in faith and love." "We give it an individual application. We say that this or that, a book read in private, a sentence from a sermon, a providential occurrence, is edifying to the individual Christian, without reference to his social position in the church." ("Metaphors of St. Paul," Chapter on "Classical Architecture.") It may be added that our word 'edify' has taken on a too exclusively sentimental sense; it has been

diluted into a term descriptive of devout and fervent discourse, with the idea of substance left out. To edify one another, as Paul here uses the word, is evidently to assist one another in the upbuilding of character upon the foundation laid by Christ, upon which there groweth "a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:21.) Our word "brace" has acquired a similar figurative sense from the Latin *brachia*, "arm," then derivatively, something which supports or binds together the parts of a structure; "brace one another up" would well express one phase of the apostle's thought here.

**GENERAL NOTE.—THE PAROUSIA, AS SET FORTH IN THIS SECTION.**

Christ's Second Advent is the chief theme of doctrinal instruction in the two epistles. The details of the foregoing section are expounded in the notes already given. The following points bear upon its theoretical and practical import as a whole:

**The word Parousia.**—The Greek word has several significations. In Biblical Greek the prevailing signification is *arrival, advent*. The verb from which it is derived denotes, primarily, *to be by*, or, *be present*; secondarily, and more frequently, *to arrive*, or, *to have arrived* at a place. The noun *Parousia* likewise, in its earlier and etymological sense, meant *presence*, but afterward became the usual equivalent for our *arrival*. It was also sometimes used to denote *substance*, and *abundance*. See Liddell and Scott's "Lexicon." The word occurs seven times in these two epistles, twenty-four times in the entire New Testament. In seventeen out of these twenty-four instances, it refers to the Advent of Christ. It is the usual New Testament word to denote Christ's Second Coming—his return to earth, when he shall call the dead to life, hold the last judgment, and establish the kingdom of God in the fullness of its glory.

The seven passages where it is otherwise used are the following, as rendered in the Revision: 1 Cor. 16:17, "And I rejoice at the *coming* of Stephanas," etc.; 2 Cor. 7:6, 7, "comforted us by the *coming* of Titus, and not by his *coming* only, but also by the comfort wherewith he was comforted in you";

2 Cor. 10:10, "but his bodily *presence* is weak, and his speech of no account"; Phil. 1:26, "that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus through my *presence* with you again"; Phil. 2:12, "not as in my *presence* only, but now much more in my absence"; 2 Thess. 2, 9, "even he whose *coming* is according to the working of Satan." Even in these seven instances it is evident, either from the context or from the prepositions employed, that it is not so much the presence that is thought of—a *being with* the person referred to—as the *arrival*, the *coming to be with* them.

Other Scriptural terms to designate the epoch of the Advent are: "Appearing" (*ἐπιφάνεια*), as in 1 Tim. 6:14; "revelation" (*ἀποκάλυψις*), as in 2 Thess. 1:7; "coming" (*ἔλευσις*), as in Acts 7:52 (referring, however, to the First Advent); "the day of the Lord," "the day of God," "the great day," "the end," etc.—these latter frequently.

It is of prime importance for the student of this subject to understand—so often is the case stated otherwise—that Parousia in the New Testament answers to two distinct words, *arrival* and *presence*, usually the former; that in most instances these meanings are not interchangeable, but that one or the other is required, according to the context; for example, the former in 1 Cor. 16:17, and the latter in Phil. 2:12. The Revisers have, unfortunately, contributed to a misunderstanding on this point, by adding, where they have translated "coming," the marginal explanation, "Greek, *presence*"; the latter is by no means the signification of the word, but only another and distinct signification. Many writers have maintained the contrary,—that the word "really," or "literally," means *presence*,—and some have drawn altogether unscriptural inferences from this supposed "literal" meaning. Canon Row says: "Parousia really means presence." ("Future Retribution," p. 209.) Dr. James Morison: "Literally, the Greek term means presence; the word 'coming,' though a good translation of the original term, is not literal." ("Commentary on Matthew," p. 455.) Dr. Israel P. Warren denies that "coming," or "advent," is a proper translation, asserting that it "denotes relations of permanence." ("Parousia of Christ," pp. 14, 15.) This is not the place to present the philological argument. The reader is referred to Thayer's "Lexicon of the New

Testament"; and for fuller proof, to a comparison of the passages in the New Testament and the Septuagint, where the noun and its cognate verb are used.

*Doctrinal import.*—The particular object of the section, and the instruction it particularly aimed to convey, have been pointed out in the notes at the beginning. Its teaching concerning the *Advent*, either directly or by implication, may be summarized as follows: It will be sudden and unexpected; it will be a personal coming of Christ, in visible form; it will be with angelic, and other supernatural and glorious manifestations; it will be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead; it will be for the final recompense and unending bliss of his people. Furthermore, although the *time* is unrevealed, and the privilege or capacity of ascertaining it is not granted to men, nevertheless it is in some sense near at hand.

It should be added, in this connection, that while the present section teaches nothing explicitly concerning the *overthrow of the Jewish commonwealth*, yet that fact is necessarily involved in the scope of its predictions, and, indeed, forms an essential element in the New Testament doctrine of the Advent. The teaching of the apostles concerning the Parousia is based on that of our Lord. The Coming of the Kingdom, and his own Return, were themes on which he gave frequent instruction in aphorism, parable, and explicit prediction; particularly in the great prophetic discourse which Matthew has recorded in chapters 24, 25. Parousia, and other terms applied to our Lord's Return, have in his teaching a broad and comprehensive signification. They refer to no one single and isolated event. That he was to depart and come again, the disciples were constantly trained to expect. At times his language suggested a spiritual return, an inward manifestation of himself through the Holy Spirit; this especially in the farewell discourses recorded in John. On other occasions, it is the final Coming to establish his everlasting kingdom, the last great epoch of human history. But another epoch is also plainly predicted, the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth. A portion, at least, of our Lord's great eschatological discourse refers to this, as is now admitted by almost all commentators. We refer the reader to the excellent exposition of this discourse in

the "Commentary on Matthew," belonging to the present series, by Dr. Broadus; also to Schmid, "Biblical Theology of the New Testament," where the substance of our Lord's teaching on the subject is given in brief, but well-proportioned outline. See, especially, pp. 221, 222, 262-269. It is, therefore, to be borne in mind in the reading of this section, that the Apostle Paul's expectation of a speedy Parousia was, in one sense, justified by the event. The threatened judgment on the Jewish Theocracy, the awful outpouring of divine wrath upon an apostate nation (compare 1 Thess. 2: 16) was indeed nigh at hand.

*Practical Import.*—Important lessons derivable from the doctrine are enforced by the apostle himself. Note the exhortations: 'Watch and be sober'; 'Put on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.' Other practical truths will come to view in every age as corollaries from the doctrine. A few words will suggest several which are particularly applicable to our own time.

1. *The doctrine of the Parousia aligns the true course of human progress.*—According to the Stoic philosophy, man was to attain his highest moral destiny by enthroning his own reason, and by bringing himself into conformity with nature. The Epicurean taught him to appropriate the world, and make the most of its present enjoyments. Other schools of thought have looked to the progress of the sciences and the development of earth's material resources; others, still, insist on the inherent improvable-ness of man. "From what has already gone on during the historic period of man's existence, we can safely predict a change that will by-and-by distinguish him from all other creatures even more widely and more fundamentally than he is distinguished to-day." (Prof. John Fiske, "Destiny of Man," p. 73.) Alas! on either of these lines man's course will only be downward, and his philosophy end in pessimism. The Christian doctrine of the future is far different. A Deliverer has descended into the world for its redemption from the bondage of moral evil; humanity is to co-operate in the furtherance of the enterprise, but its full realization awaits the return of the same Deliverer. It is by loyal service to the crucified and risen Jesus, by preparing the soul and the world for the

Return of their absent King, that the race will move onward to a better day.

2. *The doctrine of the Parousia marks the present order of things as the Church's probation.*—"A state of probation," says Bishop Butler, "implies particularly trial, difficulties, and danger, and has for its end moral discipline." The kingdom of God has not yet fully come. The present world is still a world of death and of sin; it "lieth in the Evil One." The Christian life must for the present continue to be an unremitting conflict with the powers of evil:

"Thou must watch and combat  
Till the day of the new earth and heaven."

It is clearly revealed in the doctrine of the Advent that this is not an accidental, or even a remediable, condition of things during the existing historical Dispensation. No progress of truth, no industrial reform, no scheme of national co-operation, no social or moral development of humanity, will eradicate this disorder of human life. Not even the diffusion of the gospel and the universal sway of Christianity will suffice. Each new generation must renew the contest, and repel fresh assaults from the powers of evil. Only the Coming of the world's King unto salvation will banish them forever. Hence:

3. *Christ's return is the goal of the Church's hope.*—"Till I come" (Luke 19: 13), "until the Lord come" (1 Cor. 4: 5), are words that from age to age sound in the ear of the church. The crown of righteousness is to be finally bestowed upon "all them that have loved his appearing." The heart of a true and loyal church is ever with her absent Lord. To Christian thought the vista of human history closes with the person of the returning Redeemer as the satisfaction of the world's hope, the realization of every ideal, the solution of all human problems. "Set your hope perfectly," the Apostle Peter writes, "on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1: 13, Rev. ver.) It is by no means imperative that the subject of the Advent should occupy the same relative prominence in the thought of our own day that it did in the early part of the apostolic age. But prominent it must be in the thought of every one who has truly learned to pray "Thy kingdom come." The wider the spiritual vision of the

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And be at peace among yourselves.*

12 But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, 13 and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding high in love for their work's sake. *Be at peace*

believer the more thoroughly his personal life is identified with the life of the church, the more eagerly will he look forward to the dawn of the millennial morning. "My soul looketh for the Lord, more than watchmen look for the morning." (Ps. 130:6, Rev. Ver.)

"Great King, we await thee! From watertowers of prayer

Expectant we gaze through the sin-troubled air,  
And with far-reaching vision we see  
That thy throne standeth firmly, eternal, sublime,  
While still through the mists and confusions of time  
The earth elimbeth upward to thee."

**12-28. Closing Exhortations and Benediction.** Having given instruction on the principal point which he had in view in the writing of the Epistle, Paul now closes with a few practical precepts appropriate to the condition of the young church. Beginning with duties to superiors in the church, he speaks next of duties toward all Christian brethren, then toward other persons, finally of matters that pertain to their own inner life.

**12. And (but) we beseech you.** The transition is a sudden, but necessary, one. With lifted finger he has pointed to glories beyond. *But* there are duties here. Until he come there is a settled order and constitution of things, with corresponding obligations. **Know them which labour among you.** 'Know,' recognize and regard them as such; as their labors, their official position, and their monitorial responsibilities entitle them to be recognized. When writing to the Philippians of Timothy, Paul reminds them: "Ye know his worth"—that is, his tried character. Of Epaphroditus he says: "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy; and hold such in honour." The persons designated are evidently the office-bearers of the church, in particular the elders (*πρεσβύτεροι* and *ἐπίσκοποι*), who had been "placed over them in the Lord" by the apostle. **And are over you in the Lord**—"are over" (*προστατεύοντος*) is the word usually rendered "rule," and accordingly designates here, not their superiority in rank, but their function as leaders, presiding officers, and rulers. They were charged with official and

governmental authority. See 1 Tim. 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching." Rom. 12:8, "He that ruleth (let him do it) with diligence." This duty of presiding or ruling especially entitled the elders of the church to the attentive consideration of their brethren. They ruled 'in the Lord'—that is, in spiritual things, in matters pertaining to the Christ-life and -service. **And admonish you.** Admonition includes not only rebuke of wrong-doers, but warning and advice to such as needed to be on their guard against wrong-doing. See Cremer, "Biblico-Theological Lexicon." That this duty devolved not upon the officers alone of the church appears from ver. 14, Rom. 5:14, 2 Thess. 3:15.

**13. And to esteem them very (or, exceeding) highly in love.** Having been exhorted to think rightly of their pastors, they are next exhorted to feel rightly toward them, to hold them in high esteem *lovingly*. On this point especial stress is laid, a strong superlative being used, the same adverb (with changed ending) as in 3:10 above, and in Eph. 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," etc. A most important duty, this affectionate esteem for our spiritual guides and leaders. Without it the work of "building one another up" is hindered, and indeed the overthrow of the spiritual temple threatened. **For their works' sake**—that is, the work just described. Your esteem and love are not to be determined by mere personal partialities or prejudices. "Without respect of persons" is the rule in this matter. The work that devolves upon them and which they are performing in the Lord entitles them of itself to your loving regard. The whole admonition is one of the highest importance, its observance vital to the spiritual efficiency of a church. Clearly connected with it is the following: **Be at peace among yourselves.** So Mark 9:50, "Be at peace one with another"; 2 Cor. 13:11, "Be of the same mind; live in peace"; also Rom. 12:18. These are the four passages in the

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

14 among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all.

15 See that none render unto any one evil for evil;

New Testament where the word here rendered "be at peace" is found. This state of peace or harmony has its source and basis in love, "which is the bond of perfectness."

**14. Warn them that are unruly**—an exhortation to the *members* of the church, one and all; not to its *officers* alone. A duty to be discharged in accordance with the principle laid down in Phil. 2: 4, where we are reminded to be intent upon the interests of others. Warning or admonition, however, is not merely *rebuke*. See ver. 12 above. The 'unruly' or the disorderly—not persons guilty of gross immorality, but those who were neglecting the regular industrious life suitable to the Christian name and profession. That this is the meaning may fairly be inferred from 4: 11, 12 and from the passages in the Second Epistle (3: 6, 7, 11), where the word occurs; a word originally applied to a soldier guilty of leaving his post or place in the ranks. It is not found in the New Testament except in the passages just named, namely, 2 Thess. 3: 6, 7, 11, and the present verse. Ellicott adds, by way of showing the connection with the preceding: "The Christian brethren at Thessalonica were not only to be at peace with one another themselves, but also to do their best to cause it to be maintained by others." **Comfort the feeble-minded**—those who are desponding, whose courage is small, whether "by reason of persecution (2: 14), or the death of friends (4: 13), or from any other cause." Such are the "poor in spirit" spoken of in the opening sentence of the Sermon on the Mount. The word itself (*δλιγόψυχος*) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. How eminently did Paul set the example! God, he says, "comforteth us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." **Support the weak**. Here it is not so much despondency as lack of moral courage and staining that needs help. It may spring from ignorance, or from the specific defects of religious character. It is the word rendered "sick" in many passages and in Rom, 5: 6,

"without strength." The weak in this sense often think themselves strong, and thus fall the more easily into temptation. We must support—*hold on to* them, as the word implies, not expect or leave them to stand alone. Rom. 15: 1, "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." **Be patient toward all.** The preceding injunctions of the verse apply to *special* cases; the duty of Christian patience, long-suffering, forbearance, is of universal application; it is called for in our relations with all our brethren. 'All' refers especially to Christians; so that least the preceding part of the verse seems to imply. 1 Cor. 13: 4, "Love suffereth long and is kind"; Eph. 4: 2, "with all holiness and meekness, with *long-suffering*, forbearing one another in love." God is represented throughout the Scriptures as long-suffering—that is, patient, slow to be angry or to punish; Exod. 34: 6, "The Lord God; merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

**15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man**, etc. Take heed that no one of *you*. No special oversight of others is enjoined, as the word 'see' might perhaps imply. In Rom. 12: 17, Paul repeats the precept: "Render to no man evil for evil," and then (ver. 18-21) expands and enforces it in words worthy to be written in letters of gold. The maxim is distinctly Christian, one of the loftiest in the Christian ethical codé, and constitutes one of the sternest tests of Christian character. In its full Scriptural import it has no organic place in any heathen system. It is true that individual instances of similar precepts occur in Pagan writers, but they are meteors from an outlying space, and fall into the soil of heathen thought only to be quenched. They do not represent the general spirit and purport of their teachings; even Seneca, the great Stoic moralist, forms no exception. See Lightfoot "On Philippians," p. 283. The precept prohibits revenge unconditionally, in spirit and in act. Christ, once for all, abolished the law of retaliation, as

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

16 but alway follow after that which is good, one toward  
17 another, and toward all. Rejoice alway; pray without  
18 ceasing; in every thing give thanks; for this is the

utterly hostile to the spirit of the gospel. See Matt. 5 : 39, "But I say unto you: Resist not evil" (Revised Version "him that is evil"), and the following verses. See, further, excellent remarks on this verse in Lillie "On Thessalonians." **But ever follow that which is good.** This clause is the counterpart of the preceding. The emphasis belongs rather on the latter phrase: "that which is good," that which is beneficial, which doeth good. So Vaughan, Ellicott, Olshausen, and others. See Rom. 12 : 21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Others understand 'good' here to be simply the right, the morally good. The spirit and practice here required, it is to be observed, will not come of itself; it is to be followed after, pursued; it is one of the last and highest Christian attainments. It has well been said by Julius Müller, "True morality in its realization and accomplishment includes an abundance of energetic effort." **Both among yourselves and to all men.** "The former of these actings of good is what St. Peter calls *brotherly kindness* (2 Peter 1:17); the latter is that which he denominates *charity* (Revised Version *love*). The latter is the higher grace. . . . The mutual love of Christians should be an easier attainment than the universal love of Christians to an unbelieving and persecuting world." (Vaughan.)

**16-18.** Here follow precepts that bear upon the inner life; and first a trio of mottoes, reminding us that joy, prayer, praise belong to all duties—are to pervade all life.

**16. Rejoice evermore—or, alway.** Phil. 3 : 1, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord"; 4 : 4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice." The Epistle to the Philippians has been fitly termed "an inspired comment on this precept." The joy here spoken of is a joy *in the Lord*; it is also a joy "*of the Holy Spirit*" (ch. 1 : 16), produced by him in the soul, even amid affliction; thus it was in the apostle's own experience, 2 Cor. 6 : 10, "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing." Not that the pilgrim can make his journey all the way in the land of Beulah, where "the sun shineth night and day," and where he can always have

sight of the city to which he is going. But this joy may irradiate his soul when his path lies in darkness and clouds hide the heavenly city from view. If with these Thessalonians he is awaiting the near Coming of the Lord, he will be steadfast in hope and joy. Compare King Richard's encouragement to his followers:

"Look not to the ground,  
Ye favorites of a King. Are we not high?  
High be our thoughts?"

"Richard II," Act III., Scene II.

The precept of the verse is in striking contrast with the ethical maxims of the Stoic philosophy, which aimed rather at self-conquest by the repression of feeling.

**17. Pray without ceasing.** "He shows how to be always rejoicing," says Chrysostom. The apostle does not say, "Be praying at all times," but "Never be done praying." Says Vaughan: "The *act* of prayer must be intermittent; the *spirit* of prayer should be incessant." Our Lord's life was evidently one of unceasing prayer, though often in the literal sense "he ceased praying"; for example Luke 11 : 1. Parallel with the present passage are Col. 4 : 2, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving"; Eph. 6 : 18, "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit."

**18. In everything give thanks.** Every event, every circumstance of life, will furnish an occasion and a theme for thanksgiving. This duty is made very prominent in Paul's writings, as indeed elsewhere in the Scriptures. He uses the verb and noun denoting thanksgiving nearly forty times. A concordance (see "thanks," "thanksgiving," "praise," the latter two being often used interchangeably in translation) will show the prominence of the topic in the Old Testament. Compare Ps. 50 : 14: "Offer unto God thanksgiving," and 23 : "Whoso offereth praise [literally, sacrificeth thanksgiving] glorifieth me."

The three precepts of ver. 16-18 are beautifully blended in Phil. 4 : 6.

**For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus**—'this' referring, in the opinion of most expositors, to the latter of the just men-

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesying.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

19 will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward. Quench  
20 not the Spirit; despise not prophesying; <sup>1</sup> prove all  
21 things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from  
22 every form of evil.<sup>1</sup> Many ancient authorities insert *but*.

tioned duties—thanksgiving. See Ps. 50: 23, quoted above. The perpetual offering up of grateful praise is contemplated in God's purpose of grace *toward us*. See Eph. 1: 11, 12: "having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will; *to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory*," etc. 'In Christ Jesus'—"in whom alone God wills everything and does everything concerning his church." (Vaughan.)

**19. Quench not the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is often figuratively conceived as a flame. To "quench" the Spirit is to "grieve" him (Eph. 4: 30), to disregard his presence, refuse his guidance, repress his manifestations. The admonition in this instance would seem from what follows to be aimed against disregard of the Spirit's voice as made known in the Thessalonian Church through prophecy. A similar exhortation, in a positive form, Paul sends to Timothy in his second letter (1: 6): "that thou stir up (literally, *stir into flame*) the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands." To the Thessalonians he says: Do not stifle, but cherish, honor, every impulse or voice of the Spirit. In particular:

**20. Despise not prophesying**—that is, communications from the Holy Spirit to his prophets in the Thessalonian Church. In this, as in the other early Christian congregations, there appear to have been prophets, "the second of the four great ministries ordained by Christ for the perfecting of the saints." Eph. 4: 11, "And he gave some to be apostles; and some *prophets*; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;" 1 Cor. 12, 28, "And God hath set so.n.e in the church, first apostles, secondly *prophets*," etc. They were inspired men, selected to attest in a special manner the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of his people, and to make known his will in special exigencies. Through them the church at Antioch was commanded to set apart Paul and Barnabas for their foreign missionary work. It was through 'prophesying' (the same word as in the present verse) that Timothy had been pointed out as ap-

proved by the Holy Spirit for the mission entrusted to him by Paul. See 1 Tim. 1: 18.

But important as was this gift to the life and growth of the apostolic churches, it was peculiarly liable to fall into contempt. This would happen in some cases from lack of due self-restraint on the part of its possessor. See 1 Cor. 14: 30-33. Intellectual and order-loving persons might easily go to an extreme in opposing unusual manifestations of prophetic fervor. Another reason for despising prophesying would be the presence of false prophets. As did false apostles, these would sow discord and error in the churches. The apostles found it necessary to warn converts and churches against such; 1 John 4: 1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Compare 1 Cor. 12: 3. But notwithstanding there were pretenders to prophetic gifts, and the gifts themselves were liable to abuse, these and all such spiritual endowments were to be valued, honored, and coveted. To do less than this was to "quench the Spirit."

**21. Prove all things**—or, following the text of Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort—"But prove all things," that is, all the prophetic utterances to which reference has been made. Distinguish between real and pretended gifts; "prove the spirits whether they are of God." The criterion would be the Scriptures, and the apostolic teaching which they had already received. From 1 Cor. 12: 10 it appears that there was also a special endowment bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon some; namely, "the discerning of spirits." This was, as Rigganbach remarks, "a kind of receptive prophesying, incapable therefore of producing, but of inestimable value as a sound counterpoise to possible irregularities." The exhortation here, however, is to the church as a body; by the use of all means afforded them they were to distinguish the false from the true. A special occasion for this exercise of Christian discernment soon appeared—a pretended inspired communication, to the effect that "the day of the Lord" had already

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

23 And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord

1 Gr. *presence*.

come. See 2 Thess. 2:2. In the church today how valuable is the gift of sound judgment! More brilliant talents, more showy qualities, may be far less helpful to the churches' progress. Well-instructed judgment will enable them to obey the next injunction: **Hold fast that which is good.** Not only accept, but lay hold of, and still more, *hold fast*. Compare Luke 8:15. "Such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, *hold it fast*, and bring forth fruit with patience." The connection is the same as in Phil. 1:9, 10: "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so that ye may approve the things that are excellent."

**22. Abstain from every appearance of evil.** The translation of the Common Version gives a sense alien to the original and to the requirements of the context. It should be *From every form of evil.* This precept is to be closely joined with the preceding, to which it stands in fitting antithesis. See Rom. 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Through this twofold process the growth of the Christian character goes on, assimilating the good, rejecting the evil. The energy of the second process will be directly proportioned to that of the first.

**23. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.** Better, *the God of peace himself.* See the similar comprehensive invocation at the end of chapter 3. Paul turns their thoughts, as he closes this series of exhortations, toward the one Author of all moral and holy life. Your salvation is not of us, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. God alone can accomplish that to which we exhort you, that toward which you are striving; may he himself work within you the willing and the working, and thus bring your salvation to its final accomplishment. "The God of peace"—peace in the sense denoted in the opening sentence of the Epistle—that inward well-being wrought by grace in the believer. **Sanctify you wholly**—"through and through." (Luther.) May his sanctifying grace do its all

perfect work within each one of you. This word (*ὅλοτελής*) is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. The idea of a *complete* work of grace is reiterated in "entire" (*ὅλακλησος*) of the next clause, which particularly denotes its *extent*. "What Paul prays for is the sanctification of his brethren—their absolute and entire sanctification—a sanctification perfect in its degree, and in that degree extending to every part of their nature. For the sake of giving prominence to these ideas of completeness and universality he selects words of rare occurrence and studied emphasis." (Lillie.) **Your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved.** 'Spirit and soul' are both employed in Scripture as names of the immaterial part of man; 'spirit' designates its higher, particularly its rational and moral, activities; 'soul' designates it as a vital force, possessed of organic mental activities, especially faculties of perception and feeling. The former, however, is often used, both in the New Testament and the Old Testament (Septuagint) as a synonym of 'soul'; in other words, to denote the principle of life. Compare James 2:26, "As the body apart from the spirit is dead"; Luke 8:55, "And her spirit returned." Many commentators hold that the present passage teaches the trichotomy of human nature; in other words, that there are two elements which unite to compose man's immaterial nature. So Ellicott: "Distinct enunciation of the three component parts of the nature of man: the *pneuma* [spirit], the higher of the two united immaterial parts; . . . the *psyche* [soul], . . . the sphere of the will and the affections and the true centre of the personality." Lünemann: "The totality of man is here divided into three parts." But this is to require the apostle to teach psychology, or at least to be technically accurate in his language. The philosophic language of his time, it is generally admitted, recognized the *pneuma* and the *psyche* as distinct essences. Such also has been the prevailing opinion of non-materialistic philosophers, both ancient and modern; namely, "that the subject of

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.  
 25 Brethren, pray for us.  
 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

24 Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calleth you, who will also do it.  
 25 Brethren, pray for us.<sup>1</sup>  
 26 Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss. I adjure

I Some ancient authorities add also.

conscious activity is an agent or essence distinct from the principle of life." (See Porter, "Human Intellect," pp. 36-40.) The question of its correctness is purely a scientific one. The use by Scripture writers of the terms current in their time does not vouch for the correctness of the psychology upon which they are based, even granting that they adopted that psychology. But it is far from clear that they either adopted or taught it. It certainly remains yet to be shown that the Scripture use of *pneuma* requires us to think of it as an entity distinct from *soul*, or as bestowed upon the regenerate alone. As to the present attitude of psychological science upon the question, see President Porter, as cited above. He maintains that the phenomena of vital force and of spiritual activity are to be referred to one and the same immaterial substance. "Whole spirit and soul and body be preserved." See note above on 'wholly.' The noun (*ὅλως καὶ ψυχὴ*) corresponding to the adjective 'entire' is found in Acts 3:16: "Faith . . . has given him this *perfect soundness* in the presence of you all." It will illustrate the sense here if we render: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved in perfect soundness." "Be preserved"; this is the word rendered "keep" in our Saviour's prayer recorded John 17: "Keep them in thy name"; "keep them from the evil." **Blameless unto (or, without blame at) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** See notes on 3:13.

**24. Faithful is he that calleth you.** God will keep his word.

"Firm as his throne his promise stands."

1 Cor. 1:9, "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Phil. 1:6, "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." Ps. 138:8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." The faithfulness of God is the chief theme of the eighty-ninth Psalm. **Who also will do it**—or, as we might render, "and he will perform it, too," the added particle lending a certain emphasis. The verb in the

original is without an object, which is, however, easily supplied from the context ('it'); namely, that which has been invoked in the preceding sentence.

**25. Brethren, pray for us**—"us"—himself and his companions in apostolic labor, particularly those named in the opening salutation. *What* they should ask in his behalf is more fully stated in 3:1, 2 of the Second Epistle: "That the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, . . . and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men." Compare Eph. 6:19; and in 2 Cor. 1:8-11, his statement of his need with a reference to help afforded him through the intercessory prayer of his brethren: "Ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication."

**26. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.** "Because," says Chrysostom, "being absent, he could not greet them with this kiss, he greets them through others, as when we say, 'Kiss him for me.'" It need scarcely be explained that there is here no introduction of a distinctively *Christian* custom. The kiss upon the cheek was the customary polite salutation, a token of friendly welcome among the Orientals, particularly among the Jews. Christ rebuked the Pharisee in whose house he dined (Luke 7:45) for having withheld it: "Thou gavest me no kiss." See further upon the custom, Article, "Kiss" in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible." Christians, however, were not to greet one another thus as a mere form; it was to be among them a real token of Christian love. Thus the ordinary kiss of salutation would no longer be one of those "greetings where no kindness is," but a 'holy kiss'—hallowed to the noblest use. 'Greet all' is perhaps best taken as equivalent to 'greet one another' in Paul's messages elsewhere. See Rom. 6:16. "Greet ye one another with a holy kiss." (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12). It is thus addressed to all members of the church. Many expositors, as Lünemann, Alford, Ellicott, understand this request and that in the next verse to be addressed to *the elders*. But this seems an unnecessary refinement. Of the messages in

27 I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

27 you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the <sup>1</sup>brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

<sup>1</sup> Many ancient authorities insert *holy*.

such a letter each member will appropriate his own part, and "each his own order." The elders would naturally be expected to receive the letter first, and upon them first would devolve the duty of carrying its requirements into effect, particularly that named in the following verse.

**27. I charge you by the Lord, etc.** Why this solemn injunction, which the apostle does not repeat in any subsequent epistle? "Because of his love" (Chrysostom) is too general a reason. That he had some "distrust of the rulers of the church," there is nothing whatever to prove. With Elliecott we may "perhaps fall back on the reason hinted by Theodore and expanded by recent expositors—that a deep sense of the great spiritual importance of this Epistle, not merely to those who were anxious about [them that were fallen asleep], but to *all without exception*, suggested the unusual adjuration." Lillie also suggests pertinently: "It was well, moreover, that the common right of *all the holy brethren* to the possession of the apostolic writings should be thus explicitly endorsed on the very first of the canonical [Pauline] epistles."

**28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.** Paul's farewell benediction in every epistle—the form, however, varying. To Timothy it is simply, "Grace be with you." In 2 Corinthians we have the apostolic

benediction in its full form. In one instance, the Epistle to the Romans, he appends additional salutations and a doxology. It seems to have been his custom to write it with his own hand. See 2 Thess. 3:17.

A discriminating exegesis cannot dismiss this apostolic formula as a mere formula—as the mere rhetorical and official *finis* to Paul's communications. That upon the earliest occasion of its public utterance to some company of believers, as also here in his first extant letter, it sprang from his heart's full abounding love, we cannot doubt. It expresses the utmost of his heart's desire for "all them that love our Lord Jesus" (Eph. 6:24), and accordingly he begins and ends his letters with "Grace!"

"Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days."

Exulting in "the dispensation of the grace of God that had been given" him, in "the riches", "the glory" of that "grace of the one man Jesus Christ" which was now abounding exceedingly to the church—that grace which had already begun to "reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"—all his heart goes forth in this largess of benediction, which sums up in itself all that is best and highest in human hope and aspiration.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

---

Much that has been said in the Introduction to the First Epistle applies also to this. The latter, indeed, is for the most part a sequel and supplement to the First, dealing with the same general topics, and suggested by the same circumstances. The church was still exposed to persecution, its heart throbbing with high hope, but restless under delay, and still requiring admonition to order, industry, and patient faith.

It is generally believed to have been written within a few months after the First, probably in the year fifty-three. It is evidently from Corinth, for both Silas and Timothy were still with Paul; after the residence in Corinth, which terminated in the spring of fifty-four, Silas appears to have been no longer a companion of the apostle. Moreover, the letter follows so closely the lines of thought marked out in the earlier one as obviously to suggest the hypothesis of the shortest possible interval between the two. One is conscious of a slightly heightened tone of authority pervading this Epistle: the duty of the church to maintain its own discipline in a given case is strongly enforced.

The main object is evidently to communicate further instruction concerning the Advent, and especially to correct misapprehension or perversion of what the writer had previously stated, at the same time to counteract the influence of misleading teachers concerning the doctrine. The church was now making unwarrantable calculations as to the date of the Parousia, and some were claiming that "the Day" had already come. The present letter declares that to be an error. Two events still in the future were to precede it; namely, *the Apostasy, and the Revelation of the Man of Sin*; to remind them anew of this fact is the main object of the letter.

The second chapter contains the Pauline apocalypse. It is the only description found in all the writings of Paul of that impersonated form of evil elsewhere called the Antichrist. It is a parallel picture, though written many years earlier and from a strikingly different environment, to that of the "False Prophet," and to that of "the Beast coming up out of the earth," depicted by John in Revelation. Gazing down the vista of human history, the apostle beholds, as it were, "the Last Man" in the long line of earth's incarnations of sin, and in a few broken, vivid sentences that rise into prophetic rapture declares his coming doom. Obscure in its immediate historical reference, an enigma to interpreters in every age, it is nevertheless replete with moral suggestion, and is a fragment of priceless importance for the complete exposition of the Pauline doctrine of sin.

A few modern critics, beginning with C. Schmidt in 1801, have doubted or attacked the genuineness of the letter. The reader may find the leading objections stated and answered in Lunemann, more fully in Pelt. Kern (1839) has woven what is perhaps the most acute and elaborate argument to prove the Epistle spurious; he holds that it was written between A. D. 68 and 70 (that is, after the apostle's death) by a disciple of Paul.

More recently it is the integrity, rather than the genuineness of the Epistle as a whole, that has been questioned. The second chapter is held to be of later date than the rest, and not to have been written in the lifetime of Paul. One argument against the genuineness of this chapter, or of the whole Epistle, is founded on the assumption that Nero is the person denoted by the Man of Sin—it being also assumed that neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer was inspired to predict future events. Schürer (in the "Encyclopædia Britannica") considers the question still an open one. Its discussion involves fundamental principles of apologetics and interpretation, and does not fall within the scope of the present Introduction. To the present writer the arguments of recent criticism against the genuineness of the Second Epistle seem quite as futile as those brought against the First.

It falls naturally into three divisions, corresponding to the three chapters :

Chapter 1, Introductory topics.

“ 2, Christ's Coming, and the Man of Sin.

“ 3, Closing Exhortations, and Benediction.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

## CHAPTER I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of

**Ch. 1: 1, 2.** *Address and Salutation.*—See the opening of the First Epistle. The address and salutation are here, word for word the same, with the addition, which is found also in most of the subsequent epistles—from **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** ‘Our Father.’ In Revised Version, *the Father.* See the preceding verse; also the salutation in First and in Second Corinthians. ‘Father,’ denoting his relation to his people, not specifically the Father as distinguished from the Son. Here, as throughout the New Testament, all the blessings of salvation are referred to this one common personal source—God and Christ. There is need in our age, more than ever, of giving articulate expression to this truth; an age that with materialism denies God, or else with agnosticism denies the possibility of knowing him as Father and Lord.

**3-12. Course of Thought.**—We behold the remarkable growth of your faith and love with unceasing gratitude. Especially your constancy and faith amid persecution—this we exultantly proclaim among the churches. In the midst of this adversity, remember, that the present suffering is a pledge of future glory. The day of our Lord’s appearing will be a day of requital. *Then* to you shall be release; but to your enemies the very flashing forth of his glory will be the beginning of an eternal destruction. With eyes fixed upon this consummation, we pray continually that God will complete his work in your souls, that they may at last be seen transfigured into the divine excellence of our Lord Jesus—monuments to the universe of his saving grace.

**We are bound to thank God**—‘are bound’—the word rendered elsewhere,

“ought.” Paul recognizes fresh and deepening obligation to be grateful. The extraordinary work of divine grace in the hearts of these converts calls for a corresponding acknowledgment. It is certain that the Christian who attentively regards God’s gifts and ways, will find himself increasingly impelled to thanksgiving; it is equally certain, on the other hand, that the more this impulse is felt and obeyed, the more it will lead the heart to discern occasions for it. The spirit and the expression of gratitude should be *constant*. Notice the ‘always’ and compare note on 1 Thess. 5: 18. **As it is meet.** This clause of correspondence is not wholly pleonastic, repeating the idea of obligation already conveyed. It generalizes and enforces the fact that there is a binding obligation to such gratitude; as if to say: Surely that of which I have to speak is a fitting occasion for constant thanksgiving. The clause qualifies what precedes; the next clause introduced by ‘because that’ (better rendered simply “that”) belongs to the phrase ‘thank God,’ and states the *occasion or contents* of the thanksgiving. **That your faith groweth exceedingly**—indicating great spiritual prosperity. Their faith had increased above measure. Vital appropriation of Christian truth—nay, of Christ himself—had gone on at a rapid rate during the few months that had elapsed since the last letter. They had recently had need to urge anew the request of the disciples to our Lord, “increase our faith” (Luke 17: 5), for persecution had broken out afresh. The prayer had been answered. Their Christian life was truly one “from faith to faith,” constantly budding and branching forth into fresh beauty and vigor. No wonder that the sight fills the apostle’s

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure;

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

4 you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your <sup>1</sup> patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *steadfastness*.

soul with exultant joy! By what tests he measured their progress, or what were the specific indications of it, we may gather from what follows: he mentions particularly their bearing amid affliction and persecution. **And the charity (love) of every one of you all . . . aboundeth.** See note on 1 Thess. 3: 12 and 4: 9, 10. Adversity and persecution were strengthening love as well as faith in the young church. Notwithstanding the ignorance inevitable among converts just gathered out of Paganism, and their necessarily low moral standard, there had been an extraordinary spiritual growth. The testimony is emphatic; every individual member was a radiating centre for a love that extended itself to each and all throughout the church. On the Greek words employed by Paul to describe the growth of the two graces respectively ('faith, *growth*,' *ὑπεραγάπει* 'love aboundeth, *πλεονάζει*'), Ellicott suggestively remarks that the former conveys more distinctly the idea of organic evolution and growth (compare Matt. 17: 20; Luke 17: 6), while the latter expresses in a more general way the idea of spiritual enlargement—of expanding movement toward others.

4. **So that we ourselves**, even we who have taught you—who have required and expected so much from you—**glory in you:** "Ye are our glory and our joy," he says in 1 Thess. 2: 20—in the **churches of God**—those in Corinth and the neighborhood—"the regions of Achaia," 2 Cor. 11: 10; possibly also in messages sent to more distant churches; **for your patience and faith.** On 'patience' see note 1 Thess. 1: 3. 'Patience' (or endurance, constancy) and 'faith' are coupled elsewhere; "that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. 6: 12; James 1: 3; Rev. 13: 10.) The connection of cause and effect between the two is illustrated in Heb. 11: 27 by the example of Moses: "for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." **In all your persecutions and tribulations (afflictions) that ye endure.** We see here what specific

form and manifestation of faith Paul had in mind in the preceding verse. 'Ye endure,' or, *are enduring*. The term shows that the Thessalonians were now again beset by persecution. From 1 Thess. 2: 14 it would appear that at the time of that writing there was a cessation. Nor was persecution the only trial of their faith; other adversities accompanied it: for instance, extreme poverty, with all its attendant ills. Some define 'faith' here as simply fidelity (as in Titus 2: 10), but incorrectly. The idea of fidelity is rather to be sought in the preceding term—'patience.'

5. **A manifest token**—in apposition ('which is' of the Common and Revised Versions scarcely needs to be inserted) with the preceding—'your patience and faith in all your persecutions,' etc. That is, the fact of such constancy and faith on your part is a predictive proof of what the judgment of God concerning you is to be. Compare the similar thought in Phil. 1: 28, where a cognate and synonymous Greek word is rendered "evident token." **The righteous judgment of God**—when Christ shall judge the world at his Second Coming. According to some it refers, not to the future judgment, but to God's just dealing with his people now, in that he prepares them, by being thus subjected to suffering, for future glory; so Olshausen and Rüggenbach. But the proper interpretation of the following verses points clearly to the future judgment. Paul's teaching here, as elsewhere, on the relation between present suffering for Christ and the future reward in his kingdom is but the echo of Christ's language on the same theme. See Matt. 5: 10, Revised Version, "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; also Phil. 1: 28; 1 Peter 4: 13. Such affliction is viewed not only as a special privilege granted to the believer, but as an unmistakable token of his acceptance with God—a token that he is to share Christ's exaltation and glory at his coming. **That ye may be counted worthy.**

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

6 kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompence affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the

'To the end' denotes *purpose*, which is probably not the intention of the prepositional phrase (*εἰς τό*) in the original. A better rendering of the verse would be: *a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, counting you worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye are also suffering.* The clause does not denote the purpose of the judgment, but describes what the judgment is, by showing its tendency and result. God's justice already accounts you worthy of his Kingdom, and will bestow it upon you. Noyes translates—"by which ye will be counted worthy," etc. For the force of the prepositional phrase in this and some similar passages, see Buttmann's Grammar, § 140, 10 (4). Similarly the commentaries of Lünemann, Elliott, Eadie. The meaning given in the Revision is that of the Common Version, hardly improved, either in wording or punctuation. It is favored by Alford and others.

Does the Bible, then, teach us that the patient endurance of suffering constitutes a title to the rewards of the heavenly Kingdom? It is to be remembered, in the first place, that we have here to do with sufferings for *Christ*, such as the persecution for *righteousness' sake* of which our Lord speaks. Such suffering is endured by those only who have believed in him as their Saviour. It is thus not any work of their own, but *his* redemption that has saved them. At the same time the Scriptures do teach that this life is all the way to its end a *probation*; that it is followed by *requital*, good to those who have done good, evil to those who have done evil. Thus the glories of the heavenly kingdom are held up as a *reward* for faithful endurance. So Christ "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." See 2 Tim. 2 : 12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with him"; Matt. 21 : 13, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." The next verse brings out still more distinctly the thought that the divine justice implies recompense, suitable requital, whether to ill-doers or to well-doers.

**6-10.** In the remaining verses of the sentence Paul derives encouragement for his

readers from the great fact of the justice of God—a justice to be displayed in his awards at the final judgment.

**6. Seeing** (or, as in the Revised Version, *if so be that*) **it is a righteous thing with God**—in the form of a condition asserts a fact. For another such 'if,' see Rom. 3 : 30. This form of stating a premise throws no doubt upon it, but renders it the more impressive by keeping the assertion in reserve. 'Righteous' is repeated from ver. 5, and closely connects the two thoughts. The pious sufferers of all ages have stayed their souls upon the truth of an eternally righteous God. See Ps. 7 : 9-11; "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the righteous. . . . God is a righteous judge, yea, a God that hath indignation every day." So Paul in this time of distress in the Thessalonian Church points to the throne of God and the certain fact of a final retribution. **To recompence tribulation** (or *affliction*), etc. This is not the phase of the law of retribution which Paul makes most prominent; it seems mainly intended to introduce the antithesis in the next verse—a fact full of encouragement.

**7. To you that are troubled** (*afflicted*) **rest.** 'Rest, release or deliverance from present afflictions. This 'rest' is a recompense, something *due* by divine promise and in the right order of things, as is the 'affliction' about to be allotted to their persecutors. **With us**, who write to you; *we are* to be with Christ and share his glory; so are *you*. **When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed**—literally, *at the revelation*, etc. The time of the final award—that is, when the Lord shall come in visible form from the heavens. 'Revelation,' as in 1 Cor. 1 : 7, is one of the New Testament terms used to designate Christ's Second Coming. He is to come **from heaven** (see also 1 Thess. 4 : 16) **with his mighty angels**, or, *angels of his power*—the angels who are the ministers of his power, to manifest it and to be its agents in the universe—**in flaming fire**—the visible manifestation of his divine glory. Such in the Old Testament also was the mode of God's appearances. "And the Angel of the Lord

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:

8 Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the 9 gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the

appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." (Exod. 3:2.) "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire." (Exod. 19:18.) Compare Rev. 19:12, where the "King of kings and Lord of lords," he who is called the "Word of God," is described. "And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems." The verse-division here tends to obscure the connection; this phrase properly belongs to what precedes, not to the words following, and should be made part of ver. 7.

**8. Taking vengeance on** (literally, *rendering vengeance to*) **them that know not God.** "Vengeance belongeth unto me." (Rom. 12:19 and Heb. 10:30.) The citation is from Deut. 32:35, "to me belongeth vengeance and recompence." The objects of the divine vengeance are mentioned in two separate classes—**to them that know not God, and (to them) that obey not the gospel.** The former are the Gentiles. See Note on 1 Thess. 4:5, "The Gentiles which know not God"; also Gal. 4:8; the *guilt* of such ignorance Paul establishes in Rom. 1:18, seq. The latter are the Jews. See Rom. 10:16 (Common Version), "But they have not all obeyed the gospel"; also ver. 21 of the same chapter. To the Jewish mind every revelation of God presented itself prominently as a manifestation of his *will*, as something to be obeyed. Hence their rejection of the gospel was emphatically a *disobedience*. Their punishment is pictorially represented; both these divisions of the great army of wicked men arrayed against Christ and his church will then be driven back with overwhelming disaster before the advancing King and his angelic host.

**9, 10.** These verses set forth still more definitely and vividly the contrasts of the great day. The King at his appearing will flash forth upon his foes eternal ruin, but transfigure his friends into his own glory. **Who shall be punished.** Both classes of the wicked shall be *punished*. The suffering of a just *penalty*, not correction (mere chastisement for the purpose of discipline or reformation) is clearly the meaning of the Greek phrase (*δικην τινοντιν*).

The idea of God's punishment being reformatory in its design finds no countenance in the language by which Paul describes it. It is a recompense righteously bestowed; it is a *vengeance* (see the verses above) ascribed to God's justice. One of the most powerful sermons of Jonathan Edwards has for its theme "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners." **Everlasting destruction**, etc., in apposition with punishment. The retribution inflicted upon them shall be an endless and irremediable ruin, consequent upon the glorious, mighty appearing of the Lord. Let us notice first the descriptive phraseology that follows, and then (at the end of ver. 10) consider the proper force of the term "everlasting destruction." The sense in which 'destruction' is to be taken depends in part on the interpretation of the next verse.

**From the presence (face) of the Lord and from the glory of his power.** 'From' may be understood as *causal*, "proceeding from," or *local*, "away from." Which of these two is the meaning here, is mainly to be determined from the use of the phrase 'from the face of' in Jewish speech. It is a frequent Hebraism, and may be taken in either a causal or local sense, according to the verb or principal word on which it depends. In Isa. 2:10 (compare ver. 19, 21) the verb "hide" requires the latter. In Jer. 4:26 (Septuagint) both verbs "burnt with fire" and "utterly destroyed" require the former; so also Acts 3:19, "that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." In the present verse the following considerations are decisive in favor of the former.

(1) The causal force "proceeding from" furnishes the only proper complement to "destruction" (*διεθπον*) "ruin," this being a verbal noun which does not of itself suggest the *separation of*, but rather *an effect wrought upon* the object. The entire context, indeed, suggests a representation of that whence the destruction proceeds, not of that of which it consists; this is one of the effects of the Lord's manifest presence. Precisely similar is the setting forth of the destruction of the Lawless

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

10 Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our

One, a few sentences further on (in ver. 8 of the following chapter).

(2) The following co-ordinate clause, 'and from the glory of his power,' seems to require it. This describes not the issuing of an edict of banishment (as in Matt. 25 : 41), but sets forth pictorially an outgoing of *power*, effecting, as it were, the instant overthrow and ruin of opposers.

(3) This mode of representation harmonizes with other descriptions of the effect of Jehovah's face, look, or presence. See Ps. 104 : 32. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." (*Hab. 3 : 6*) So also Christ's coming is described in the next chapter, 2 : 8. The latter passage furnishes the clue to Paul's conception here.

(4) In reply to Lünemann's objection that on this interpretation ver. 9 contains (with the exception of 'everlasting') only a repetition of what has already been said in ver. 7, 8, it may be answered, that the instant and eternal ruin, on the day of judgment, of all the enemies of God and his gospel, is the fact which the writer is intent on bringing into special prominence; hence its repetition in the vivid language of prophecy. The manifestation of Christ's coming shall itself bring everlasting ruin upon his foes. This is the leading thought and source of encouragement in chapters first and second.

**10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints**—that is, when he shall come from heaven in *order* to be 'glorified in his saints.' His 'saints' shall in that day shine forth with a glory that shall glorify Christ who bestowed it, imparting new lustre and honor to his sovereign name. Already upon earth, while still sanctified but in part, Christ's people glorify him. See ver. 12 and John 17 : 10, "and I am glorified in them." 'To be glorified,' a frequent Old Testament expression (see Ps. 89 : 7; Ezek. 28 : 22, in Septuagint), is also employed to denote the manifestation of the divine holiness in the just punishment of enemies. See Exod. 14 : 4, "And I will be honored upon [in] Pharaoh, and upon [in] all his host." **And to be admired** (*marveled at*), etc. This manifested glory of the saints will elicit the wonder of all the beholding universe.

Christ will not only show himself glorious, but *wonderful*, by that which he works in his people. To this part of the sentence (qualifying 'glorified' and 'marveled at') belong the words **in that day**, which impressively close the sentence in the significant manner of Christ himself. Note the similarly emphatic position of these words as used by our Lord in Mark 2 : 20—**Because our testimony among you was believed**. This parenthetical addition brings the whole thought closer to his readers as one of personal interest, including them, as it does, among the glorious and admired company.

With reference now to the phrase already referred to: 'Everlasting destruction' (*ἀλεθρον αἰώνιον*) is a phrase not elsewhere used by Paul. Its meaning in the above sentence would scarcely require elucidation beyond what the drift of the whole passage as already explained, as well as the general teaching of Scripture, affords, were it not for doubts cast upon the meaning of the words 'everlasting' and 'eternal,' in current theological controversy.

It is to be noted first that the Greek word does not mean destruction, in the sense of the extinction of being, but rather *ruin*. The overwhelming defeat of an army, the devastation of a land, is its 'ruin' (*ἀλεθρος*). So also the ruin of a man's hopes, fortunes, happiness. This is classical and biblical usage alike. In Scripture language two words (*ἀλεθρος*, *ἀπώλεια*), and their cognates, are frequently used of divine retribution; they are characteristic of the New Testament, especially of the epistles, as denoting the future and eternal doom of unbelievers. That annihilation is not meant, as many have claimed, is shown at length by Dr. Hovey. See "State of the Impenitent Dead," pp. 114-123. That the first of these words (*ἀλεθρος*) is not to be rendered "separation," has been shown above—a rendering only allowable by giving to the preposition "from" (*ἀπό*) its local sense. Farrar ("Life and Work of St. Paul," chap. xxx) renders—"eonian exclusion," namely, "an eternal cutting off from the presence of Christ," denying, however, that "eternal" means everlasting, or endless, and vaguely defining it as

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

11 testimony unto you was believed, in that day. To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of *your* calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of

1 Gr., *good pleasure of goodness.*

"something above and beyond time." On the contrary, the Greek word (*aiώνιος*), here as elsewhere, is properly translated *eternal*, in the sense of *everlasting, endless*. "*Æonian*" is only a poetical synonym, borrowed in recent English literature from the Greek; it has the same signification, and no other. All Greek lexicographers are in substantial agreement as to the definition. Liddell and Scott, *lasting for an aion, perpetual, everlasting, eternal*. Thayer, "1. Without beginning or end, that which always has been and always will be"; "2. Without beginning"; "3. Without end, never to cease, everlasting." Cremer ("Biblico-Theological Lexicon") comprehensively defines, "*Belonging to the aion, to time in its duration—constant, abiding, eternal.*" The reader of the Bible may be assured that the science of lexicography has but one deliverance as to the proper signification of the word.<sup>1</sup>

The word has been already discussed in previous volumes of this series of Commentaries. See particularly Dr. Broadus on Matt. 25:46. One point may be noted here. "*Eternal*," in Paul's writings usually, in John's always, is used to describe the blessed and unending life imparted by Christ to believers; here only does he apply it to the future punishment of the wicked. There is nothing in the context to indicate a special or unusual sense. 1 Cor. 6:9, 10 is distinctly against the view that a limited period of punishment was ever in his thought: "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators nor idolators . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." The general tenor of his teaching, moreover, assumes that those whom he is seeking to win to Christ will be forever lost without him (compare Rom. 2:7-9), a conviction by no means coldly held as a matter of relentless logic, but inwrought into the very fibre of a

heart that throbbed, as have the hearts of few, with the unutterable love of Christ.

**II. 12. Wherefore—to which end**—in our prayers we have ever this end in view, that glorious consummation when Christ "shall be glorified in his saints," etc. **That our God would count you worthy of this calling**—that is, of the *call* (*κλήσις*), the summons that you have received; identical in meaning with Eph. 4:1, "The calling wherewith ye were called." It seems unnecessary, with Lüemann and Rigganbach, to depart from the usual New Testament meaning and define it passively, "that to which you were called." The reason assigned is, that the divine call is an act in the past, whereas the term here refers to something future, of which the believer is to be adjudged worthy. This objection forgets the vivid *present* in which Paul writes, and does not justify rejecting the active sense which the word has in every other instance. It is the call itself—a summons continually ringing in the believer's ears, and therefore characterizing his whole present state of probation. God's call is the first act toward the realization of the divine election—a realization not yet accomplished, but needing the constant operation of divine grace to count its objects worthy, and to enable them to be fruitful in purposes of goodness and works of faith. The apostle has no doubt of the final deliverance of the Thessalonian Christians from their enemies, and their glorification in the kingdom of Christ; he sees a "manifest token" of it (ver. 5), a token afforded by God himself (Phil. 1:28); but none the less constant is his prayer to this end; none the less does he toil and strive for it.

**And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness**—'fulfil,' complete, bring to its full realization; the Revised Version gives, "desire of goodness"; similarly, Ellicott, "desire for goodness"; Rigganbach, "inclination to good-

<sup>1</sup> *Aiώνιος* is the adjective in Biblical language which corresponds to the frequent adverbial phrase *ἐπειδή τούς ἀιώνας*, "forever." "*Everlasting*," or "*eternal*," is the established meaning of the one, as "*forever*" is of the other. The idea of *limited* duration, when either of

these terms is employed, is either absent or else positively excluded from its thought. The contrary view has thus far gained no footing in the domain of scientific philology.

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

12 faith, with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER II.

NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by gathering together unto him.

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, <sup>1</sup>touching the <sup>2</sup>coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *in behalf of*. . . . . <sup>2</sup> Gr. *presence*.

ness"; the word denotes a rational desire, as distinguished from a mere impulse or instinctive feeling, and might be rendered, "aspiration after goodness." The rendering of the Common Version corresponds to that of Wyclif, Calvin, and other of the older expositors. But the word here rendered 'goodness' is not applied in the New Testament to God, but only to men; besides, the next member of the sentence—**work of faith**—must necessarily apply to the Thessalonians. On this latter phrase, see note on 1 Thess. 1:3. **With power**—powerfully, to be connected with 'fulfil.' It is characteristic of the ardent apostle that nothing less than a *mighty* work of grace will satisfy him. To Paul's conception the gospel of Christ was "the power of God." (Rom. 1:16.)

Our aspirations, our good intentions, are not self-fulfilling. Nor can we of ourselves realize them. They will be unrealized, unproductive, except as God shall fulfill them. They must be energized with his power; he must work both the willing and the doing.

**12. That the name of our Lord Jesus, etc.** "The name" of Jesus in Biblical language, here and often, denotes *Jesus as revealed to men*. One of the primitive designations of Christians was "those who call on the name of Jesus"; that is, pray to him. See Acts 9:14. **And ye in him.** See John 17:22, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them"; Rom. 8:30, "And whom he justified, them he also glorified"; 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit." **According to the grace, etc.** Recurring, as he closes this section of the Epistle, to the ground-thought embodied in the apostolic salutation—the eternal purpose of grace revealed to the world in the gospel of Christ.

**Ch. 2: 1-12.—Christ's Coming, and the Man of Sin.**

**Course of Thought.**—But, brethren, as regards the Day of the Lord, the day that shall bring requital, and the consummation of our hopes, let no one persuade you that it is already here. Do not be driven from your steadfast course of daily faith and duty; do not become restless and excited, even if a prophet appear, or a message come purporting to be from us, asserting that the end of the world has come, and the Day of the Lord has dawned. Two events are to precede the Advent: the great Apostasy, and the Manifestation (*ἀποκαλυψθῆ*) of the Man of Sin. Have you forgotten my instructions on this point? You know the Power that now restrains the arrogant and lawless Adversary. This Restrainer shall continue for a while to hold him in check. But as soon as he shall be removed, then the Adversary shall be manifested. Afterward Jesus shall appear, and his appearing shall be the destruction of this foe, whose wiles and lying wonders are deluding the unbelieving and disobedient.

**1. Now we beseech you.** 'Now' (a preferable translation would be *but*) marks a quick transition to the topic that forms the leading theme of the latter; namely, the question as to the time of our Lord's return. This he introduces, not in a cold, didactic manner, but with affectionate urgency, suitable to its practical importance in their case; similarly in 1 Thess. 4:1. The topic had for them more than a theoretical interest, and bore directly on their daily life. **By (or, touching):** The rendering 'by' makes Paul adjure his readers *in view of* this event. This explanation was common in the older expositors, but is not according to New Testament usage. **The coming . . . and our gathering together unto him.** 'Coming' here as in 2:20; 3:13, etc., of the previous letter, is *Parousia*. On the general subject of the Advent he had taught them

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

2 ing together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at

orally, as well as in the previous letter, and on 'the gathering together' he had given special instruction in 4: 13-18 of that letter.

**2. That ye be not**, etc. The clause thus introduced simply states what the entreaty is: *we beseech you that ye be not soon shaken*, The question as to the proper translation is similar to that in ver. 5 of the previous chapter, where the Revisers use the same phrase, "to the end that"—that is, whenever an apparent occasion presents itself, whoever shall seek to induce you; be slow to hear the "Lo here," or the "Lo there" (see Mark 13: 21 and Matt. 24: 23, seq.) of rash and mistaken leaders, whose errors will "lead astray, if possible, 'even the elect.'" The history of the church, from Paul's time to this, shows how frequent have been the times of religious excitement, when men renounced settled convictions and neglected daily duty at the announcement of the arrival of the Advent. **Shaken in (from your) mind**—unsettled in mind—distracted. The word properly denotes the agitation of a stormy sea. James (1: 6) describes unsettled or wavering faith by a similar figure: "He that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed." **Neither be troubled**. This is a still stronger expression than the preceding, *do not be disturbed or terrified*. Our Lord had enjoined vigilance in view of his return, but not restless instability. Steadfast faith, and fidelity in daily duty; each man at his post and fulfilling his trust; not being ever on the *qui vive* lest the Lord come and others know it sooner than we.

The danger to their steadfastness in connection with this subject might come, or had come, in three ways: **by spirit**—that is, by any supposed prophetic communication. See note on 1 Thess. 5: 19-21. Any deliverance, purporting to be on the authority of the Holy Spirit, that contradicted the apostolic instruction on this head, whether from a member of the church claiming inspiration, or from any other person, was promptly to be rejected. **Nor by word nor by letter as from us** (that these are to be closely conjoined, see ver. 15 below)—either an oral message or a

letter, that should be ascribed to the apostle and his colleagues. 'As,' purporting to be 'from us.' The preposition 'from' (δια, through) denotes mediate authorship. The reference is thusto "any message purporting to be a divine revelation sent to you through us." That such a fictitious message, or a forged letter, had already been circulated among the Thessalonians, is not expressly stated. Jowett supposes that Paul refers to "the possibility only of some one or other being used against him." But the language here and in 3: 17 seems to warrant the conclusion that false traditions and documents, afterward so numerous and so prolific of evil, had already begun to be employed against the truth of the gospel.

In discussions on the canon it is often assumed that the first age of the church—the age that collected and transmitted our present Scriptures—was wholly uncritical. The present passage hints at the existence thus early (A.D. 53) of counterfeit apostolic documents, and shows that the church, very soon after its origin, had to be trained to distinguish between the spurious and the authentic.

**As, to the effect that, the day of the Lord**—as in 1 Thess. 5: 2, the day of the Lord's return. The term, as we have seen, is one that belongs to the language of prophecy, and is used to designate various crises, events, and periods, in the gradual fulfillment of the divine purposes. Its specific import must therefore be ascertained from the context. Here it plainly denotes the Second Advent—**Is at hand**. *Is [now] present*—is unquestionably the correct rendering. 'Is at hand'—of the Common Version, which follows Calvin and the older English versions, is a translation unsupported by the usage of the language, either in Biblical or classical writers. Hence Dr. Dods ("Popular Commentary on the New Testament") is hardly correct—"Whether Paul means that the day of the Lord had been represented as having already begun, or as being immediately imminent, it is difficult to say." In each of the six other New Testament passages in which it occurs, the verb (*ἐνέστηκεν*, perfect tense) clearly means "to be present."

3 Let no man deceive you by any means; for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

3 hand; let no man beguile you in any wise; for *it will not be*, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

<sup>1</sup> Many ancient authorities read *lawlessness*.

It appears that the erroneous doctrine now threatening the church was, that the promise of the Parousia had already been fulfilled; either that the Lord Jesus had come unobserved, somewhere or in some manner unknown to them; or that the period broadly termed *the day of his coming* had already begun. If the former, it was one of those false alarms of stealthy advents foretold by Christ—“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is the Christ, or Here, believe it not.” (Matt. 24:23, Rev. Ver.) Probably it was the latter form of the error; namely, that “the day” had arrived, that “the end” had come. Had not Paul’s last letter told them that it should come as a thief in the night? This view once adopted, unstable souls would be the prey of false teachers; the flood-gates of disorder would be opened in the church; idleness, unthrift, and spiritual indolence would be the speedy fruits.

3. After emphatically reiterating the admonition not to be deceived in either of the three ways mentioned, **by any means, or in any manner**, Paul proceeds to communicate additional instruction as to the *precursors*, and the *relative time*, of our Lord’s Coming. It was to be preceded by two manifest signs (“signs of the times,” Matt. 16:3), warning tokens of the great day, as Elijah had been of the first coming. By these they were to know, not *when* the day was to be, but that it was *not yet* to be. Both these warning tokens were events that should be discernible by the eye of a studious, attentive faith. These were: first, the great Apostasy; second, the public advent of the Man of Sin. The precise relation of these two events to one another, the statement is too brief to enable us to ascertain. They may be contemporaneous—two parallel movements in the great final revolt against the headship of Christ; or, they may be successive stages of that revolt, the latter being the culminating manifestation. It seems clear, however, that the opposition of the Man of Sin is not included in the Apostasy, the latter being the treason of friends rather than the hostility of avowed enemies. The

following notes are simply for the elucidation of the text itself. At the close of the section the substance of its teaching will be briefly considered. See page 90.

**For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.** Not simply ‘*a falling away*,’ but *the falling away*, as in the Revised Version; that, namely, concerning which he had instructed them (see ver. 5), and which had been predicted in Christ’s words. See Matt. 24:10-12. The apostle’s instruction was founded in part, it may be, on his exposition of Daniel’s prophecies, but also on our Lord’s own teaching. As for the words supplied in the English versions, they are plainly suggested and required by the context. ‘*Come first*,’ that is, previous to that day. See the same sense of “*first*” in Mark 9:11. It was to be an extensive defection from the ranks of Christ’s professed followers, a decline of faith, not merely a general increase of wickedness. This is evident from other Scripture: “The Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith,” etc. (1 Tim. 4:1.) Compare also Luke 8:13; Heb. 6:16. It was the express prediction of Christ: “The love of the many shall wax cold.” The Apostasy here spoken of, we may therefore confidently conclude, is to be developed *within* the Church. Christ will be wounded in the house of his friends, and great disaster will befall the Church at the hands of professed believers. So far as the apostle’s prediction fell within the horizon of his own age, namely, before the destruction of Jerusalem, it had a manifest fulfillment. History records the rapid and disastrous spread of varied heresies, especially that of Gnosticism. False teachers sprang up; men who, to use Jude’s words, had “crept privily” into the Church; ungodly men, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and denied Jesus Christ. See Jude 1:4. The later epistles abound in denunciations against these traitors to the faith; the writer of Hebrews threatens all such with the fearful vengeance of the living God. (Heb. 10:26-31.)

This widespread apostasy during the apos-

tolic age, which shook the foundations of the Church, and seemed to human eyes to forebode its extinction, was doubtless a presage and a type of a corresponding defection which shall take place before the final personal Advent of Christ "without sin unto salvation." To what extent the apostle Paul apprehended the reach of his prediction, we may not say; probably, like the older prophets, he had but dim discernment "what time or what manner of time" it was to which the Spirit of Christ which was in him pointed. It is evident, however, that portentous spiritual events near at hand were embraced in this predictive outlook—events for which his prophecies, like those of our Lord, were already preparing the Church.

Too many interpreters have taken the following 'and'—ver. 3, 'and the man of sin be revealed'—as continuing the account of the apostasy. They regard the Man of Sin as the development and personal head of this great movement of unbelief and error. But the apostle's language by no means requires this identification, and certainly it ought not to be assumed without proof. He seems to speak not of one, but of two precursors to the Advent. The point is a critical one in the interpretation of the whole passage; the form of the sentence does not decide it; the following context will need to be taken into the account. Our further examination of the passage will afford more or less convincing grounds for distinguishing *two* great manifestations of evil that shall precede the Parousia, one springing up within, the other without, the Christian Church.

Chrysostom, and others among the Fathers, failed to make this distinction. He remarks: "He calls Antichrist himself the Apostasy, as being about to destroy many and make them fall away." So also Godet: "The Antichrist will be the representative of the great Apostasy which is to take place before the return of Christ." Similarly, Fairbairn "On Prophecy," p. 366. On the other hand, Whitby defines the falling away as that "of the Jews from the Roman Empire, or from the faith." Weiss, also, and many others, confidently assume that it was to be an apostasy from the midst of Judaism. But the passage itself furnishes no proof for this view; this part of Whitby's theory confuses and weakens his ar-

gument, on the whole, an able one, concerning the general drift of the passage.

**The Man of Sin.**—The second named precursor of the Advent of Christ. In proceeding to examine this unique and difficult prophetic description, it is important to fix definitely our exegetical points of departure. The postulates laid down in the foregoing commentary on the First Epistle (see 4:13) may be repeated here:

1. Scripture prophecy, in so far as it predicts the future of the kingdom of God, is organically one.

2. The language of prophecy is of necessity symbolic.

3. New Testament prophecy also has an organic unity of its own.

4. Prophetic prediction is not designed to enable the reader to anticipate the external and secular phases of history.

5. We are to distinguish between the positive teaching of the apostles, and their personal hopes and impressions.

Furthermore,—as in the question above referred to, so here,—we are to bear in mind that the apostle is simply reiterating previously given oral instruction. The obscurity of the passage is largely due to this circumstance, rather than to an oracular reticence, such as some have ascribed to the writer, that he might not arouse the malignity of the enemies to whom his language referred.

Another consideration is vital to the understanding of this, and the corresponding section in the First Epistle. They foretell a Parousia of the Christ, and a Parousia of the Antichrist. There are certain marks of correspondence in the Scriptural descriptions of these two very different Advents, which show that they are designed to represent two broadly antithetic events, or series of events, in the future of the kingdom of God. But if the prediction of the Advent of Christ embraces both earlier and later fulfillments, the same may be found true in the prediction of the Advent of Antichrist. It is undeniable that our Lord's teaching concerning his own Advent was truly—though by no means finally, as we believe—fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth. That this latter was itself a type and prediction of his final Coming at the end of the world's history is held by many of the ablest expositors. See the excellent ex-

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that | 4 he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all

position of chap. 24, 25, by Dr. Broadus, in the "Commentary on Matthew," belonging to the present series. We have seen that the language of the Apostle Paul, in reference to the Parousia, is susceptible of, and, indeed, seems to require, the application of the same principle of interpretation. His conception of the Parousia conforms to that presented in the gospels. It will not be surprising, then, if we find that in announcing the Parousia of the Man of Sin there is vision of a near future, as well as one far more distant. The interpreter may now verify certain predictions of our Lord's Advent in the events connected with the overthrow of the Jewish polity; it may be possible in these same events to find a definite verification of this antithetic Advent predicted by Paul. As to the chief and ultimate fulfillment, it does not devolve upon the interpreter to construct a description of the actual event. Only the event itself can thus interpret the prophecy. The interpreter's function is rather to explain the language as it stands, to elucidate, so far as may be, the contents of the prophetic symbols, and finally to deduce the spiritual truths taught therein to the church of Christ.

To proceed to the terms of the description itself: the apostle declares that the Day of the Lord, Christ's Advent, shall not be until the 'the Man of Sin be revealed.' We observe, first, that the stress belongs to the verb 'be revealed'; this appears from the order of words in the Greek. It is the *revelation* of the Man of Sin that constitutes the predicted antecedent of the great Day—not merely his presence on the earth, not the secret workings of his power, but his public visible appearance in the arena of history—the disclosure of his

real character. The apostle then goes on to name and to describe him. According to the preferable reading (*árovias*, "lawlessness," instead of *ámaprias*, "sin"), he is the *Man of Lawlessness*,<sup>1</sup> or *Iniquity*. See the margin of the Revision. The Revisers have rendered the word (*árovia*) by "iniquity" in every passage where the word occurs in the New Testament except two: Ver. 7, below, and 1 John 3:4, "Every one that doeth sin, doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (Revised Version.) The apostle's phrase designates the character of this person; iniquity or lawlessness is his distinguishing characteristic; in him it is as it were impersonated and incarnate. Whether 'man' here denotes an individual, or has a collective sense, will be considered below. At all events, the apostle is here *picturing* an individual. It is significant that Paul, who a few years later was to expound the relations of Sin and Law in his letter to the Romans, singles out this as the distinguishing feature of the Antichrist, and brands him *Lawless*. **The son of perdition—or, destruction.** So rendered in various passages, both in the Common and Revised Versions. The word (*áπώλεια*) is cognate with Apollyou, "the Destroyer." "Son of," in Biblical diction, expresses one's nature, or one's distinguishing characteristic, in the strongest manner. See note on 1 Thess. 5:5. Here it denotes the *destiny* of the Lawless One. See ver. 8, below. Compare John 17:12, where our Lord plainly refers to Judas Iscariot as a "son of perdition"; also 2 Peter 2:12.

**4. Who opposeth.** As this clause is to be taken absolutely, the verb having no object (so most of the recent commentators), the sense will be more plainly given thus: *the*

<sup>1</sup> "Man of Lawlessness," *árovias*. So Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, Tregelles; Zieckler also ("Kurzgefasster Kommentar," rendered *Ruchlosigkeit*). It has strong early testimony in its favor: Codices R B, the Thebaic and Memphitic Versions, also the Armenian, Tertullian, Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Origen, who, however, also quotes the other reading. Both readings are early—traceable back to the second century. For *ámaprias* are A D and the later uncials; the Syriac, Latin, Gothic, and Ethiopic Versions; Origen, Hippolytus, and Theodoret, with other patristic testimonies. It certainly cannot be assumed offhand, with Lünemann and many, that *árovias* is taken from ver.

7 and 8; for it is quite as likely that *ámaprias* should have been an early gloss on *árovias*, as the reverse. It may be noted that *árovia* and *áπώλεια* are coupled together in Wisdom 5:7 (a well-known passage), and in the same order as here. Intrinsically, *árovia* would seem entitled to the preference. 'The Man' of this passage impersonates not so much sin as such, but the pride, power, and resistance of sin—its opposition to the divine law, for which *árovia* was the familiar term in Biblical Greek. It may be that the phrase 'Man of Sin' was also Pauline, and by oral transmission had become familiar in the early church as a synonym for Antichrist.

is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

that is called God or <sup>1</sup>that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the <sup>2</sup>temple of God, setting himself

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *an object of worship*. . . . . <sup>2</sup> Or, *sanctuary*.

*Opposer, the Exalter of himself against every one that is called God.* ‘Opposeth’ whom? Primarily, Christ and his kingdom; so we may infer from the proper meaning of Anti-christ, the name applied to this or a similar arch-adversary by John. “This is the Anti-christ, even he that denieth the Father and his Son.” (1 John 2:22.) The verb ‘opposeth’ (*ἀντιεισενεσθως*), it will be observed, has the same preposition (*άντι*). That the context also specially points to the opposer of *Christ* has been shown by Lunemann: “For the Man of Sin stands in the closest and strictest parallelism with Christ. He is the forerunner of Christ’s Advent, and has, as the Caricature (*Zerrbild*) of Christ, like him an advent and a manifestation; he raises the power of evil, which exalts itself in a hostile manner against Christ and his kingdom to the highest point: his working is diametrically the opposite of the working of Christ, and it is Christ’s appearance which destroys him.”

Following upon the assertion of his *hostility*, we have next that of his *arrogant pretension*. This is especially manifested in that he **exalteth himself above (against) all that is called God, or that is worshipped**. He is not only an antagonist to Christ: he is a counter-Christ; he sets himself up as a rival to God and Christ. He exalts himself above every object of worship, against every one to whom deity is ascribed. This feature in the characterization is taken directly from the description, in Daniel 11:36, 37, of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Old Testament type of Anti-christ: “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods: and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all.” **So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God.** Literally, “so that he hath seated himself;” or, perhaps, “so that he seateth himself.” The clause apparently describes something that has taken

place—a fact of the writer’s own time. The aorist here, compared with the present tenses in ver. 7, would seem to settle this point beyond question. Not that the entire delineation is comprised within the apostle’s own time; descriptive and predictive elements are blended in the present passage; but there is a manifest reference to existing phenomena known to his readers, opposing forces and manifestations of evil concerning which he had found it necessary to instruct and encourage them. Hence, the very form of Paul’s statement forbids us to inquire with Hutchinson, in what *sanctuary* or *innmost shrine* “he is to take his seat.” The question is, in what temple he *had taken* his seat. In its primary and historical reference, therefore, we understand by ‘the temple of God’ the temple at Jerusalem. Antiochus Epiphanes, who furnishes the traits in this description of the Man of Sin, had actually desecrated the Jewish temple. The Thessalonian readers would understand the temple in Jerusalem to be meant, unless a remoter, figurative meaning were plainly indicated. If the temple at Jerusalem be meant, it suggests at once that Paul is describing a *Jewish* foe, Jewish opposition to the kingdom of Christ. Of no other malignant and defying agency of evil, known to be in existence at that time as an arch foe of the church of Christ, can it be said that it had enthroned itself in the temple at Jerusalem. Caligula, shortly before his assassination in the year 41, had commanded the erection of a statue to himself in the Holy Place, but Caligula at the time of this writing could scarcely have been in Paul’s mind as the veritable Man of Sin. By many expositors, however, ‘the temple’ here is taken as meaning *the Christian Church or a Christian Church*, the figurative sense in which Paul uses the word temple in 1 Cor. 3:17. Compare 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:21. This was the interpretation current among the Greek Fathers, in modern times adopted by Calvin, Pelt, Olshausen, Alford, and many others. In the comprehensive interpretation of the prophecy, including both its immediate and its remoter reference, the latter signification would not

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work;

5 forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was 6 yet with you, I told you these things? And now 7 ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work; 1 only there

<sup>1</sup> Or, only until he that now restraineth be taken, etc.

necessarily be excluded; but in deciding upon its primary and immediate reference, we are forced, with Ellicott, to decide in favor of the former, which is also, according to the statement of Irenæus, the earliest traditional interpretation. **Showing himself that he is God**—or, more literally and in more explicit English, *declaring that he himself is God*, the emphasis being on ‘himself,’ not on ‘is,’ as Alford has it. This is the climax of human sin; it is self-assertion in its falsest, most impious and defiant form—a colossal, monstrous lie. As Julius Müller suggests, it is conscious falsehood; he cannot really believe his own assertion.

**5. I told you.** The imperfect tense of the verb naturally implies instruction more or less continuous. Thus the present chapter simply embraces the heads of considerable oral teaching on the subject during the few weeks or months immediately following their conversion. This teaching, as remarked above, seems not unlikely to have been in connection with readings or lessons in the Book of Daniel.

**6. And now ye know.** ‘Now’ has almost the sense of *accordingly*—that is, having had such oral instruction, *this being the case*. On this subject also of the Restrainer, they had been taught, and the apostle merely calls to mind the main points: **What withholdeth**—or, *that which restraineth*, neuter; below it is masculine, “he who now letteth,” or “one who restraineth.” ‘Restraineth’ what? The next clause suggests the answer: a premature revealing of the Lawless One; ‘restraineth’ him from being revealed, until the divinely-ordained time shall have come. *What or who it is that restrains*—as to this we have absolutely no information other than the designations themselves, and what is implied in ver. 7-11, immediately following. “The neuter in ver. 6 denotes the power, the principle; the masculine in ver. 7, a personality at the head of that power; at least this is *a priori* the most natural suggestion.” (Riggenbach.) That the restraining power denotes the Roman Empire, and the ‘one who restraineth’ the

Roman Emperor, is the judgment of almost all interpreters at the present time. **That he might** (or, *may*) **be revealed**. The *purpose* of this delay is that in his appointed time (both the delay and the time are divinely ordained) he may be fully revealed, may stand forth in his true character. **In his time** (or, *his own season*)—that is, when his time shall come. ‘Own,’ in the Revised Version, might well be omitted—probably, even following the text used by the Revisers; certainly, according to the Greek text of Tischendorf, and of Westcott and Hort.

**7. For the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness), etc.** What follows is explanatory, hence the ‘for’—a restatement of the present posture of the matter, and of the future event. *Now*, this lawless one is active, but mysteriously disguised; his essential falsehood undisclosed or repressed; *then*, in due season, he shall stand forth recognized and conspicuous, but not until the power appointed of God to prevent that manifestation shall be taken out of the way. ‘*Mystery of lawlessness*’—evidently the inner, animating principle of that which in its embodiment is designated above *man of lawlessness*; mysterious because of its unique moral character. This feature tends to confirm the view already advanced, that the primal type of the Man of Sin is to be found in the Judaism which was then opposing the gospel. If the history of the Judaistic crusade against the apostolic church were known to us in its details, instead of in its barest outlines, we should better understand, no doubt, the peculiar significance of this and other expressions in ver. 9, 10, by which this crusade is characterized. In its secrecy, its vast “underground” power, it might well be called mysterious, perhaps also from the subtly-blended truth and falsehood, honest zeal and malignant, satanic hate, that rendered Pharisaism in its later developments one of the profoundest moral enigmas of history. It is to be observed that at this point, where Paul comes to speak more particularly of the *existing* agency of the Lawless One, and of its results, he uses

only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

1 Some ancient authorities omit *Jesus*. . . . . 2 Some ancient authorities read *consume*. . . . . 3 Gr. *presence*.

the general term 'mystery,' and below, in ver. 11, a "working" (energy) of error. This suggests at once, and the impression becomes stronger on reflection, that he is not describing any historical personage, and also that his prophetic vision into the future outlines a vaster figure than any single Nimrod or Napoleon of sin. **Doth already work.** The word (*επεργέται*) implies active, energetic agency. It is here distinctly stated that the principle of sin which was hereafter to be embodied in some distinctly personal representation was at that time active, and was kept in check only by another more powerful agency.

**Only he who now letteth;** that is, *there is one that restraineth now*. The present agency, active though under restraint, will continue until he who is now restraining shall be removed. 'That which restraineth' of ver. 6 is here *one who restraineth*—masculine and personal. The change is significant, and in this connection can hardly be for the sake of rhetorical vividness. It seems distinctly to indicate a personality as wielding this power of restraint. The history of the times leads to the obvious inference that Paul is guardedly referring to the emperor, the personal representative of the existing civil power. **Until he be taken out of the way.** This translation goes a little beyond the original, which does not at all necessarily imply a removal of the Restrainer by any other agency than his own. More literally, *until he be out of the way*; that is, until his power shall terminate, nothing at all being said as to whether this should take place by a peaceful transition, or be the result of an overthrow by some agency from without. Farrar is also wrong: "until he be got out of the way." Hofmann considers the phraseology as more likely implying a voluntary withdrawal of the Restrainer from the scene of action, or from participation in the events spoken of.

**8-10. And then shall that Wicked (lawless one) be revealed.** Paul's language rises, as this vision of the future opens before

is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord <sup>1</sup>Jesus shall <sup>2</sup>slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the <sup>3</sup>manifestation of his <sup>3</sup>coming; *even he*, whose <sup>3</sup>coming is according to the working of Satan with all

him, into the majestic sublimity of Hebrew poetry. The parallelism and rhetorical fullness of diction, the rhythm and imagery of this brief prophetic strain, reflect the exultation with which he sees, as if near at hand, the swift destruction of this malignant and terrible embodiment of sin. The emphasis is on 'then'; *then*, as soon as the Restrainer's power shall be withdrawn. *The Lawless One* is undoubtedly identical with the *Man of Lawlessness* above.

**Whom the Lord (Jesus) shall consume** (Revised Version, *slay*). The Christ shall slay the Antichrist. A speedy downfall and destruction of this empire of sin, for the Lord shall then come, and his Coming shall be the destruction of the Lawless One. Shall slay **with the spirit (breath) of his mouth**—prophetic diction of the Old Testament. Compare Isa. 11: 4: "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked"; Job 4: 9: "By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger are they consumed." There will be no struggle, no laborious contest with this Antichrist; the might of God will simply breathe destruction upon him. Far different that other "breathing forth" (see John 20: 22) by which our Lord symbolized the giving of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. **And destroy with the brightness (or, by the manifestation) of his coming**—that is, as soon as his Coming shall be made manifest. 'Brightness of his coming,' though poetically suggestive (compare Milton: "Far off his coming shone"), was not quite correct as a translation. The very sight of the advancing King shall carry terror to the heart of his adversary and bring annihilating ruin. The vision of him from afar shall be, as it were, instant destruction to his foes. See ver. 9 in the preceding chapter: "Destruction [proceeding] from the face of the Lord."

**9. Even him**—supplied in English in order to show that (*whose*) the pronoun following, refers to the first and main subject of the sentence, "the Lawless One." **Whose coming**—whose *Parousia*, the same word being used

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

10 <sup>1</sup>power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that <sup>2</sup>perish; because they received not the love of the truth,

1 Gr. *power and signs and wonders of falsehood.....2 Or, are perishing.*

that is applied to the Advent of Christ (his *first* as well as his *second* Coming to earth; see 2 Peter 1: 16); the Advents of the Christ and the Antichrist are here placed in close and striking contrast. **Is after** (*according to*) **the working of Satan.** 'Is' (present tense) asserts a general attribute of the Antichrist's Parousia. It is not to be taken as referring to the future alone, but apparently includes as well existing manifestations of his power at the time of the writer. A comparison with ver. 7—'working' (*ἐργάζεται*) with 'doth already work' (*ἐργάζεται*)—shows plainly that the apostle is describing not merely future, but existing phenomena of Antichrist's activity. Notice also in the following verses—"that perish," or, *are perishing*, and "shall send," or, *sendeth*. See also remarks on "sitteth in the temple of God," ver. 4. Ellicott and the great majority interpret otherwise. "The (ethical) present marks the certainty of the future event." So also Lünenmann, Riggensbach. But such interpretation strains both text and context. The characteristic elements of his coming are such as Paul discerns already in active operation. The final centralized and incarnated force of evil, while yet future is, however, described as seen in its existing manifestations. In the first place, there is seen in his working an "energy of Satan." Satan will enter into him as into his typical predecessor, Judas. (John 13: 2, 27.) He will be a superhuman incarnation of evil. "In Antichrist, Satan's masterpiece, will Satan, so to speak, exhaust himself, putting forth through him all his own resources of strength and skill, and that in both spheres of his operation, the external and the spiritual." (Lillie.) **With all power and signs and lying wonders**—literally, "all power and signs and wonders of falsehood;" 'lying,' or 'falsehood,' applies not merely to the last noun named, but to all three—his power, signs, and wonders. In this interpretation Ellicott, Alford, and indeed most expositors are agreed. It is worthy of notice that these three—*power, sign, wonder*—are precisely the three terms most employed in the gospel history to denote

our Lord's supernatural deeds. But his were true miracles, these of the Antichrist are false; the latter are lying, counterfeit, powers and signs and wonders. "Antichrist's coming is brought into comparison with the earthly ministry of Christ, as exhibiting itself also as surrounded with all forms of wonderful action, which, however, are grounded, not like Christ's miracles, in truth, but in falsehood, in that they are performed, not in God's power, but in Satan's." (Olshausen.) Assuming that it is the Jewish enmity to the gospel, to which the apostle has alluded as the mystery of lawlessness which is already active, it is not difficult to see the historical basis for this part of the description. See the account of Simon Magus in Acts 8: 9, 10, "who used sorcery and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that he himself was some great one;" also Acts 13: 6-12, concerning Bar-jesus the "sorcerer and false prophet," "full of all guile and villainy," etc. As Israel turned away from God and his law, it became the dupe of false prophets and pretended miracle-workers. One of the qualifications to a seat in the Sanhedrin, it is stated on the authority of Jewish writers, was to be skilled in magic.

**10. With all deceivableness (deceit) of unrighteousness.** A notable proof of the 'power' just spoken of is his success in deceiving men; he is mighty to deceive. Sin is essentially deceitful; "exhort one another daily, lest any one of you be hardened by the *deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. 3: 13), the same word in the original as 'deceit' here. Compare Christ's prediction: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." (Mat. 24: 24.)

**In (or, for) them that perish.** It is *for*, it reaches and affects 'them that perish,' or, *are perishing*, not true believers. Why it deceives the 'perishing,' and not all, is indicated: **because they received not the love of the truth**—'the truth,' having a somewhat definite reference to the moral and religious truth comprised in Christ's gospel. The cause, observe, is not merely rejection of the truth,

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

11 that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should 12 believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

but aversion to it. "Men loved the darkness rather than the light." (John 3:19.) They not only "believed not the truth, but *had pleasure in unrighteousness*" (ver. 12, below); "they hold down the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) The apostle's words also hint at a criminal indifference to their eternal welfare; the gospel, offered them **that they might be saved**, they rejected. Truth does not become saving truth unless it be loved. It will be loved, if the heart but open itself, or if the Lord but open it, as in the case of Lydia at Philippi. And he will open it, if he gain consent. In this incidental phrase, 'received not the love,' there is certainly profound suggestion as to the nature of unbelief. Religious truth does not compel the will, nor is the assent of the intellect altogether independent of the feelings. On this point, compare A. S. Farrar, "History of Free Thought," pp. 14, 15.

**11. God shall send them strong delusion.** Revised Version reads, *Sendeth them a working of error*, stating, as in ver. 9, 10, not only a principle containing the germ of a prophecy, but what was actually going on at the time of writing. To consider this merely "a vivid prophetic present," as Hutchison and many, requires a strained reading of the whole passage. The apostle, writing under the evident impression that the Coming of the Lord was not far off, sees already the tokens of Anti-christ's presence and power, and the phraseology of the paragraph from ver. 4 to ver. 12 naturally adjusts itself to this fact. The next paragraph strongly confirms this interpretation; it takes its tone from the vivid contrast between the deluded and perishing adherents of Satan, and the believing church to whom he was writing. Upon those who reject and repress the truth God sends "an energy of error" (*ἐνέργειαν*). Falsehood begets falsehood. Sin is punished by sin. This is the divine order of things. It is involved in the nature and constitution of moral beings. It is thus, especially, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Rom. 1:18.) The en-

tire paragraph (Rom. 1:18-31.) is an illustrative commentary upon the present declaration. **That they should believe a lie**—literally, *the lie or falsehood* (the word is the same as that rendered 'falsehood' in margin of ver. 9), the falsehood which the Man of Sin asserts and embodies.

**12. That they all might be damned**—properly, *judged*. The clause properly depends on the preceding verse taken as a whole. This revelation of God's wrath against conscious and deliberate sinners, while they are yet on the earth, prepares the way for the fuller disclosures of the day of judgment. The lines of providential retribution are already seen converging toward the final crisis of doom. This line of thought reappears more fully and distinctly in the first two chapters of Romans. The phrase, 'Might be damned'—that is, *condemned* (though the context implies a condemnatory judgment), expresses more than the original. **Who believed not**, etc. Here, as implied in ver. 10, the opposite of belief is viewed, not merely as intellectual non-belief, or even disbelief, but as a desire of unrighteousness. "Had pleasure" (*εὐδοκήσαντες*) is a word cognate with that translated "desire" in 1:11.

#### GENERAL NOTE ON VERSES 1-12. THE MAN OF SIN.<sup>1</sup>

I. In the notes introductory to the section, I have pointed out its organic relation to the whole body of Biblical prophecy, and particularly its place in New Testament prophecy. It remains, in the present note, to summarize the traits of this great enemy of Christ and his kingdom, upon whose revelation and destruction the Apostle Paul's prophetic gaze is fixed. What are the prominent features of "this terrible image, which Christ's apostle, standing in the bright Pentecostal morn of Christianity, already saw casting a baleful shadow across the heavens and lifting looks of proud defiance even in the temple of God"?

1. *Lawlessness*.—Its distinguishing feature

<sup>1</sup> In part from the "Baptist Quarterly Review," July, 1889; article, "The Man of Sin."

is *Anomia*, iniquity or lawlessness. He is the "Man of Lawlessness," the "Lawless One"; his working is "a mystery of lawlessness." This triple repetition lends significance and emphasis to the name of the Pauline Anti-christ. It designates the most obvious aspect of his sin. The term is not a weak negation, marking lapse from law, mere moral defect; it is rather resistance, deliberate disobedience, and transgression. The seat of the antagonism is the will; this incarnate iniquity is self-will raised to its highest power.

2. *Opposition to Christ and his Kingdom.*—This is the notable mark. He is the Opposer. He represents the chief human force arrayed against Christ. His sin is not merely ungovernable defiance of moral law, bursting through all restraint, but is a definite antagonism to Christ and his redemptive work.

3. *Self-deification.*—"Who exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped." He even declares himself to be God. (ver. 4.) All sin tends to this. Selfishness is the folly that says in its heart, "No God!" But the sin here charged reaches the very height of impiety, a deliberate and avowed assumption of the prerogatives of God. It implies a claim to obedience and worship. Coupled with this is the fact that he hath taken possession of God's temple, enthroning himself, so to speak, in the very presence chamber of God.

4. *Mystery.*—Its arrogant and ungovernable impiety was cloaked in mystery. Its deeds were known to the apostles and his readers, its agencies in active operation, yet, to a certain extent, concealed within a veil of secrecy. We must note, however, that "mystery" in the New Testament denotes not only that which is hidden, unknowable by human reason alone, but that which it belongs peculiarly to the Christian revelation to disclose. If we are to take the term here in its specific New Testament sense, it points to a mode and degree of iniquity inexplicable, except through divine revelation, and which only the fuller unfoldings of the plan of grace will explain to the understanding of man.

5. *Lying pretensions and false miracles.*—It "works with signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness." It is Satanic in pretension, in power, and in deceit. It is a "working of error," causing those who

are perishing to "believe a lie." These are appropriate traits in one who arrogates to himself religious pre-eminence and enthrones himself in the place of God. They are traits that properly belong to the *religious* sphere, and mark a person or a power not merely opposing Christ, but claiming to supersede him, demanding exclusive allegiance, and arrogating to itself the whole domain of faith.

6. *To be revealed before the Parousia.*—What the apostle predicts is not the coming of the Man of Sin, but his *revelation*. That which has been hidden from mankind—somewhat pertaining to his agency, personality, covert and deceptive operations—shall be in due time disclosed. No definite statement is made either as to the manner or as to the content of this "revelation," only that it and the apostasy are the two notable precursors of the Parousia.

7. *The revelation delayed by a Restrainer.*—There is *one who restrains*, there is *that which restrains* the full manifestation of this Incarnate Iniquity, "until he, the Restrainer, be taken out of the way," or, as it might better be rendered, "until he be out of its way." When once that restraining force shall be "out of its way," shall cease to be exerted in its restraint, then the revelation shall take place. This restraining force, it is now generally admitted, was the Roman Imperial Government.

8. *Doomed to destruction at the Parousia.*—The destruction is not described literally, but in the familiar language of apocalyptic symbolism: "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming."

9. It is a personality, or an agency, *contemporaneous with the writer*. The language of the description throughout implies an agency of evil already known to the writer and his readers. "The mystery of lawlessness is already working." This can only refer to the lawless power previously spoken of. The phraseology of ver. 9-12 is also most naturally explained as having reference to existing facts—on the one hand, "a working of error," accompanied by "power and signs and lying wonders"; on the other, men who "are perishing," and who "believe a lie." Still more decisive is the language in ver. 6, where the restraint exerted upon the Man of Lawlessness

—a restraint that operates to hinder the predicted revelation—is clearly spoken of as a present fact.

II. Remembering that we have primarily to consider moral agencies, and facts known both to Paul and his readers, the question that meets the interpreter is this: What arrogant, impious, and Satanic enemy of Christ was it that was to be revealed and destroyed at the not far distant Parousia? In the brief sketch of recent opinions given below, it will be seen that certain classes of interpreters do not undertake to answer precisely this question; of those who do, the opinions are various and widely divergent. As already indicated in the notes on the text, I do not understand the passage to refer to some *one individual person*, a human monster of iniquity, who was to come into being, either in the near or in the distant future; nor, on the other hand, to *an abstract principle of evil*, operative in all periods, and restricted to no particular sphere of history. The proper counterpart of the Man of Sin is rather to be sought within the sphere of Jewish history, and, primarily, during the apostolic age. How obviously an unforced exegesis of the passage suggests Judaistic antagonism to the gospel as the groundwork of the delineation, may be seen in the foregoing notes. A considerable body of modern scholars, among them exegetes with the vast learning of John Lightfoot, and with the sympathetic penetration of Godet, while differing widely on minor points, and in their application of the details of the passage, have, nevertheless, been at one in that general conclusion. Lightfoot ("Harmony of the New Testament," 1654) says: "The several characters that the apostle gives of the Man of Sin agree most thoroughly to that generation and nation." Whithy supports this view, with abundant citation from historical sources, in his "Paraphrase and Commentary upon all the Epistles of the New Testament," London, 1700. "No nation under heaven," he says, "more deserved to be styled the Man of Sin than did the Jewish nation, after the spirit of slumber and blindness was come upon them." J. B. Lightfoot, the recently deceased Bishop of Durham, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," article, "Thessalonians, Second Epistle," briefly assents to the same view.

To be more definite, the *principle* denounced

by the apostle is that of Pharisaic Judaism; its historic *embodiment* we are to find in the Jewish hierarchy and religious leaders of the century following the crucifixion. The Judaism that rejected Christ; that persecuted the early church; that hounded the apostle Paul to the death; that endeavored to prevent the salvation of the Gentiles, neither itself entering into the kingdom nor suffering others to enter; that crept into the apostolic church to undermine and destroy it; that called forth Paul's righteous indignation, when he pointed out the "wrath to the uttermost" impending over its guilty head; and that called forth the still more awful invective of our Lord near the close of his ministry,—this was the one conspicuous and deadly enemy of the church, at the time when the Epistle was written, and for many years to come. No other historic embodiment of sin, I am convinced, so fully and accurately answers to the terms of the prophetic description. For a fuller vindication of this interpretation, which starts from the position taken by Lightfoot and by Whithy (though not identical in all points with theirs), see the article already cited, "Baptist Quarterly Review," July, 1889, particularly pp. 13-26.

III. It would be an endless task to present a history of the various interpretations of this passage—first, those current in the early church, and then, those that have found advocacy in modern times, especially since the Reformation. The views of different interpreters cannot be properly set forth without some explanation of the dogmatic or critical pre-suppositions by which their interpretations are modified or determined. The historical or critical position of a given writer will sometimes suggest at once the reason and the explanation of his theory. It can easily be understood, for instance, how Luther should hold the Man of Sin to represent the Papacy, or how a modern critic like Kern, who supposes the Epistle to have been written after Paul's death, should find here nothing more than a description of Nero. The early Fathers generally regarded the prediction uttered by Paul in this passage as one that had not yet been fulfilled in their time. "They all regard the Adversary here described, as an individual person, the incarnation and concentration of sin." A sketch, both of earlier and of later

opinions, may be found in Lünemann. See, also, Alford, "Greek Testament," "Prolegomena to Second Thessalonians," and the article "Antichrist," by Meyrick, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

Since the Reformation, the favorite interpretation among Protestants has identified the Man of Sin with the Pope, or the Papacy. With the English Reformers it was almost universally an article of faith. See the "Dedication," by the translators of King James's Version; also the "Westminster Confession of Faith," chap. 25. "There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that Man of Sin and Son of Perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God."

Among the more recent advocates of this view are Birks, Fairbairn, Elliott, and Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness. One indication of its popularity is the extensive circulation obtained by Dr. Guinness's book, "Romanism and the Reformation." Bishop Wordsworth vigorously advocates the same view. See his "Greek Testament," also a small pamphlet, "Is the Papacy Predicted by St. Paul?" London, 1880. In the latter, he says: "Although I firmly believe this prophecy to have long since *began* to be fulfilled, and to be now in *course of fulfillment* in the Roman Papacy, I do not suppose that it has been *exhausted* by the Papacy, as it now is. If I might venture to express an opinion as to the future, which I do with all reverence, I am inclined to believe that the Roman Papacy will develop itself into something worse. The impulse and encouragement which, by its monstrous dogmas, usurpations, and superstitions (revolting to the intellects of Europe), it has given, and is giving, to *Infidelity*, leads to the expectation that it will probably give rise to the appearance of some personal Enemy of God, who will exhibit in all their terrible fullness the features portrayed by St. Paul, and who will be destroyed by the Second Coming of Christ."

Now, while it is true that the history of the Papacy reveals an astonishing likeness, in some points, to the figure delineated, this view must, nevertheless, be rejected. The Papacy could not have been primarily and chiefly in the

mind of the apostle, if we admit that the restraining power of which he speaks denotes the Roman Imperial Government. The "Protestant" interpretation, so called, has been dispassionately criticised by Pelt ("Ad. Thessalon.", pp. 197-204), Riggelnbach, and Eadie ("Commentary on Thessalonians," 1887).

Riggelnbach, in Lange's "Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical Commentary," continues the exposition begun by Auberlen, and adopts, substantially, his views. He identifies the Man of Sin with "the Godless, self-deifying ruler of worldly empire"—in other words, some imperial autoocrat, arrogant and atheistic, who is yet to appear. The Restraining Power is the existing moral and legal order in human society. Similarly, Baumgarten, Thiersch, Luthardt, Zöckler; also Alford, see below.

Weiss ("Biblical Theology of the New Testament") holds "the Apostasy" to be the final rejection of the gospel by the Jews, the final display of their hostility to God and his law. The Man of Sin is the pseudo-Messiah who issues forth from and heads this apostasy. Weiss, however, considers these earlier predictions of the apostle to be inconsistent with those in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans.

Lünemann (author of the "Exposition of First and Second Thessalonians" in Meyer's "Commentary") thinks that the apostle had adopted erroneous Jewish ideas concerning the coming of a personal Antichrist, but that he sets forth important truths concerning the culmination of ungodliness which shall precede the final Coming of the Lord.

Alford scarcely attempts to elucidate Paul's conception, as it was and as his readers understood it, but inquires what the future reality is which it represents to us. He regards the Man of Sin as "the final and central embodiment of that lawlessness, that resistance to God and to God's law, which has been, for these many centuries, fermenting under the crust of human society, and of which we have already witnessed so many partial and tentative eruptions. Whether he is to be expected personally, as one individual embodiment of evil, we would not dogmatically pronounce; still we would not forget that both ancient interpretation and the world's history point this way."

Dr. Warfield, in an instructive series of

13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you<sup>1</sup> from the beginning unto salvation in sanctifica-

<sup>1</sup> Many ancient authorities read as *firstfruits*.

papers in the "Expositor," 1886, entitled "The Prophecies of St. Paul," argues that the apostasy "is obviously the great apostasy of the Jews"; that the Man of Sin is "the line of (Roman) emperors, considered as the embodiment of persecuting power"; and that the restraining power is probably the Jewish state.

Dr. Dods (in "Popular Commentary on the New Testament," edited by Dr. Schaff) says: "It seems idle to speculate in what precise form the Man of Sin will appear. It is possible that, as in Paul's day, the Jews were the most bitter antagonists of the gospel, so it is reserved for them to exhibit wickedness and opposition to the truth in the most aggravated form possible to man."

More confidently, Godet: "Whence is such a being most likely to come? Evidently from the midst of the same people among whom the Messiah himself appeared. It therefore seems to me probable that the false Messiah will be an outcome of degenerate Judaism, and that the Jewish nation, putting itself at the head of the great falling away, or apostasy, of Christian humanity toward the close of its existence, will then give birth to its false Messiah, the very ideal of man's natural heart, which has rejected the true Christ. With a daring impiety, such as can only belong to him who has turned his back on a holy destination, a Jew wonderfully gifted, will, by raising the standard of atheistic pantheism, proclaim himself the Incarnation of the Absolute, and draw after him the great mass of mankind by promising a golden age."

Lillie, in his "Lectures on Thessalonians," understands the prediction to point to some one man, "the recipient of all Satan's energy, in whom Satan, so to speak, should become incarnate, and thus bring to a decision the long-standing feud between himself and the woman's seed." He is incorrect in stating that expositions such as Whithby's *restrict* the prophetic character of the description to persons and principles and events that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem.

**13-17. Transition to the hortatory division of the Epistle; exhorts and prays that they may be steadfast.** But you, beloved brothers, are not of those who have pleasure in unrighteousness, and believe the lie. God has chosen you to be sanctified and to believe the truth. Therefore be steadfast.

**13. But we are bound to give thanks.** The apostle turns with fresh gratitude from the view of the unbelieving world to the elect company of believers, who will soon be listening to the reading of this letter. The transition to a reiterated expression of personal joy and thanksgiving (see 1:3 above, and compare 1 Thess. 2:18 with 1:2) leads to a slight emphasis upon the subject 'we,' and the Greek plainly requires it, yet not so as to slur the still more emphatic 'you' afterward. **Beloved of the Lord**—the Lord Jesus Christ; the name God follows immediately as a distinct subject. But in 1 Thess. 1:4 it is "brethren beloved of God."

**Because God hath from the beginning chosen you.** Compare "your election" in the verse just cited. 'From the beginning' is generally taken, in accordance with Paul's teaching elsewhere, to mean, from the beginning of all things, from eternity. See Eph. 1:4, "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world"; also 2 Tim. 1:9; also the use of the phrase in 1 John 1:1, 13. Hutchison objects to taking the phrase in this sense, because "this choosing is represented here by a word (*εἵλετο*) which is not used in the Pauline writings to signify the divine election proper." But it is so used in the Septuagint; in various passages it denotes the electing, preferring love of God, and is sufficiently often synonymous with the other and more frequent word (*εξαπέλυ*) to remove the apparent objection to its being taken in the same sense in the present passage. 'From the beginning' might, so far as usage is concerned, refer back to the beginning of the gospel work in Thessalonica (compare 1 John 2:24; 2 John 6), but that reference is certainly less suitable to the present context. That begin-

14 Wherunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

14 tion of the Spirit and <sup>1</sup> belief of the truth: wherunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort

<sup>1</sup> Or, *faith*.

ning was a quite recent fact. See Paul's language at the opening of *Philippians*, written some ten or eleven years after the establishment of the church. Weiss, adopting the reading of the margin of *Revised Version*, "as first fruits" (see *Critical Notes*), denies that election is revealed in the *Scriptures* as a pre-temporal act of God. ("Biblical Theology of the New Testament," Vol. II., p. 3, Note.) **To salvation through sanctification of the Spirit**, etc. 'Through' denotes the *means by which* this election to salvation is to be realized; the thought is that you should be saved through the sanctifying power of the Spirit, and the believing appropriation of the truth. 1 Thess. 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (see other references there). Faith in the truth is here viewed as a continuous act of the soul, and as closely connected with the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

**14. Whereunto**—that is, 'unto salvation through sanctification,' etc., of the preceding clause. **He called you . . . to the obtaining.** The call referred to has here, as elsewhere in the writings of the Apostle Paul, a distinctive Christian sense; it is not merely a general call or invitation, but an efficacious call. New Testament exegesis is clear and decided on this point. "It is the divine act of grace through which God effectually calls the elect to faith, and thereby to participation in the fellowship of salvation." (Weiss, "Biblical Theology of the New Testament," Vol. I., p. 296.) "Calling, in the phraseology of Paul, is not a mere invitation or exhortation addressed to an individual in the name of God, by the medium of an apostle or other messenger, and to which man may or may not respond, according to the disposition of the moment. Doubtless apostolic preaching is the most ordinary outward medium, through which the knowledge of the gospel is brought to men or by which God is placed in connection with the individual. The very term *calling* is bor-

rowed from this mode of communication, and does not prejudice in any way the effect which it may naturally produce. But the theological meaning of the term is far from being thus exhausted. To this outward invitation there is added, as an invariable and essential element, a corresponding inward feeling produced directly by the contact of the soul with God. *Calling*, in the sense in which Paul uses it, cannot fail or remain ineffectual." (Reuss, "History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age," Vol. II., pp. 108, 109.) **Of the glory of our Lord**—of that glory into which our Lord has entered. See John 17:22.

**15. Therefore**—the instant deduction of the believing heart from these briefly sketched foundation truths of faith—God's electing love, and effectual calling into Christ's glory. Such truths are ever the shelter of the saints,

"When storms of sharp distress invade."

As Paul says elsewhere: "The firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. 2:19, Rev. ver.) Here he exhorts his readers, keeping to their 'belief of the truth,' to **stand fast and hold the traditions**—rather, *the instructions*. 'Tradition,' as generally used, implies oral transmission from one age to another, or through a considerable period of time. The Greek word (*ταπάδοσις*) used here plainly refers to personal instructions, whether orally or by writing. The Thessalonian Church had no 'traditions' at all in the ordinary sense of the word. They had the Old Testament Scriptures, and the personal teaching of the apostles who had visited them; the latter, which, however, took up into itself the former, constituted the instructions to which Paul refers. **Or our epistle**—the first to this church, written several months before.

**16, 17. Now our Lord Jesus himself, and God our Father**, etc. This petition brings to a close the second and principal division of the letter; similarly, 1 Thess. 3:11—

17 Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work. 17 and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

## CHAPTER III.

**F**INALLY, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:

13. Compare also the prayers, 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16. These outbreathings of prayer are not *insertions*. They do not interrupt the thought, but spring from it, and blend inseparably with it. Every page of Paul's writings is fragrant with the incense of prayer—the language of a soul manifestly living in constant communion with its God.

It is observable that Jesus is first named, then God the Father, both being united as the one subject of a verb in the singular. So also in 1 Thess. 3:11, only that there "our God and Father" is placed first. "Herein shines the divinity of Christ; it is not possible that the name of any man could be so often joined with the name of God." (Riggenbach.) **Which hath loved us.** 'Which' (properly, "who") is usually and preferably taken as referring to the nearest subject, 'God our Father'; so Ellicott, Alford, Lünemann, and the punctuation of the Revised Version. Lillie refers it to both 'Jesus' and 'God.' **Everlasting consolation** (or, *eternal comfort*)—not the transient, delusive comfort derived from worldly sources, but that which abides and is perennial. God, to his people, is "the God of all comfort." (2 Cor. 1:3.) From him has come into the heart of the believer the personal Comforter, the Holy Spirit, with everlasting ministrations. See John 14:16: "And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."

'Comfort' as a rendering of the Greek word (*παράκλησις*; in the next verse occurs the corresponding verb) is preferable to 'consolation' in the Common Version. It is derived from the Latin *comfortare* (*fortis*, strong), to strengthen, support, and in earlier English frequently had this positive, large sense. It is not the precise equivalent of the Greek word (*παράκλησις*), for each has a considerable area of meaning peculiarly its own; still it is, in many passages, the best rendering of that word. It implies more than the merely external condition of enjoyment, exemption from annoyance, or even re-

lief from affliction; these are later and lesser meanings. To comfort originally was to impart strength, fortitude, cheerful energy, and in many New Testament passages the word should be understood in this sense.

In these days, when materialistic science declares God unknowable, and historical rationalism knows him only under the cold abstraction, "a power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," this utterance of the great apostle: "God our Father who hath loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope through grace," becomes invested with fresh significance, and goes forth among the hearts of men upon a new mission from the Holy Spirit.

**Good hope**—"a hope that maketh not ashamed." (Rom. 5:5.) Compare also Titus 2:13: "The blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." **Through grace**—join with "hath given." 'Comfort' and 'hope' are gifts that belong pre-eminently to the reign of grace. **Comfort your hearts**—greatly needed by the persecuted, struggling church, with "fightings without," and within the alternating hopes and fears peculiar to these inexperienced beginners in faith, not veterans yet, much needing to be established. **Establish.** See 3:3, below; also 1 Thess. 3:2. Bring your Christian life to maturity and strength.

**Ch. 3. Closing Exhortations.**

**1-5.** We are continually praying for you; pray for us. Pray for the extension and triumph of our gospel, and for our deliverance from its enemies. Enemies to the faith, alas, there are, but the Lord will be faithful to you. He will deliver you from the Evil One, will enable you to be obedient, and vouchsafe love and patient endurance.

**1. Finally**—introducing the last division as in the previous letter—**brethren, pray for us.** The order of the original, *pray, brethren, for us*, lends additional emphasis to the verb 'Us,' namely, the writer, with Silvanus and

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

2 with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men: for all have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you,

Timothy. The same request, in fuller, emphatic form, as in the previous letter. (5:25) The unceasing impulse to prayer which he felt for those to whom he wrote; the sense of its efficacy and its constant necessity which mark Paul's letters, lead him also to seek the prayer of his brethren. See Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:18, 19. Compare also Philem. 22. This oft-repeated request comes from the apostle with the force of a precept (from the apostle, and from the Lord whose word he spoke). The duty is imperative, perpetual, and special, to pray for the minister of the word. The passages cited show how prominent it is made among the duties which devolve upon the members of a church. Paul's conviction of its efficacy comes out in such passages as 2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19. On the obligation to still wider intercessions, see 2 Tim. 2:1 and James 5:13-18.

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

**The word of the Lord**—as in 1 Thess. 1:8, equivalent to "the gospel of God." **May have free course**—spread rapidly; that it may not be bound (2 Tim. 2:9, "But the word of God is not bound"), nor be hindered in its progress. Compare Ps. 147:15, "He sendeth out his commandment upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly." **Be glorified**—have its power and glory manifested in the salvation of men. **Even as it is with you.** This clause is probably to be taken with both of the preceding verbs; it is so punctuated in the Revised Version, and so understood by Elliott and most interpreters. Lünemann connects it with "glorified."

**2. And that we may be delivered**—a second special petition in behalf of Paul and his companions in Corinth. **From unreasonable and wicked men.** Among these perverse and wicked men were doubtless the

*fanatical Jews* of Corinth, "who opposed themselves and blasphemed," and "with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the *jungnient seat*" of Gallio. See Acts 18:5-17, which furnishes so apt a framing of the apostle's words, that it might well have been written as a historical foot-note of this verse. Compare also 1 Thess. 2:15, 16, and notes there. Some, however, understand *false brethren* in the *Corinthian Church* to be spoken of (so Zwingli, and among recent writers, Hutchison). **For all men have not faith**—expressive of the feeling suggested by the obstinate opposition of these enemies of the gospel, in contrast with the previous, "even as it is with you"; "for it is not all, alas, who have the faith," or, "who are of the faith." The marginal reading preferred by the English Revisers retains the article before "faith" in order to indicate explicitly that the writer is speaking of faith in the definite, Christian sense; as if to say: for all have not *believed the gospel*, 'the word of the Lord' just spoken of in the first verse.

The substance of this prayer which Paul will have his brethren make for him deserves attention: it is not for 'us' personally, he seems to say, either our present safety, or even our spiritual welfare, but our message, and the cause we represent. How thoroughly Paul identifies himself with his mission is shown by the spontaneous change of subject; that the *word* may be glorified and that *we* may be delivered; that is, that the "word" may not "be bound," to borrow the antithesis cited above from 2 Timothy. Again, we observe that the first petition is positive—for the spread of the gospel, its promotion *extensively*, and for its glorification, its promotion *intensely*. The second is negative, that its enemies may not prevail against it.

**3. But the Lord is faithful.** Better, following the order of the Greek, *faithful, however, is the Lord*, for the opening word 'faithful' is evidently suggested by the last word of the previous sentence. The apostle reverts once more to *their* condition and needs, and with winning courtesy and tenderness he prepares the way, in this and the fol-

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of

4 and guard you from <sup>1</sup>the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both 5 do and will do the things which we command. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the <sup>2</sup>patience of Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of

<sup>1</sup> Or, *evil*. . . . . <sup>2</sup> Or, *steadfastness*.

lowing two verses, for the specific commands required by the existing exigencies of the church. We may paraphrase the transition thus: "All have not faith; but *you* are of the faith, and the faithful Christ will establish you therein." Compare 2 Tim. 2:13: "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself"; also 1 Thess. 5:24. **And keep you from evil** (or, *the evil one*). The Common Version takes the noun as neuter. But see the references to Satan in 1 Thess. 2:18; 3:5; 2 Thess. 2:9. These favor the translation in the Revised Version. Compare also the *probably* correct rendering ("the evil one") of the same term in the Lord's Prayer and John 17:15; 1 John 2:13; 5:18.

**4.** He will establish and keep you; but that implies on your part obedience; and as to this, **we have confidence in the Lord**—a confidence, not in you only, but in him "who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"; a confidence that he has heard and will hear our prayers, and that "he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.) It is an assurance founded on love and faith, not the prediction of a revealed fact. **The things which we command**—commands already given, some of them to be repeated in the following paragraph. See ver. 6.

**5. And the Lord**—the Lord Jesus, as usually in Paul's writings. There is no sufficient reason for supposing, with Theophylact and some of the Fathers, with Wordsworth also, and Blunt, that the Holy Spirit is specifically meant. **Direct your hearts into the love of God**—lead you into loving God and into possessing his love. Interpreters diverge on the question whether Paul here speaks of God as *source* or *object*. For the former, Olshausen, Rüggenbach, Pelt; for the latter, De Wette, Lünemann, Alford, Ellicott, Lillie, Hutchinson. But is not the distinction quite foreign to his thought in a passage like this? The primary and prevailing sense of the phrase "love of God" in Paul's writings is the love which God has and bestows—the inflowing

current of redeeming love, as well as the outflowing emotion of the believer's heart. Compare Rom. 5:5; 8:35; 8:39; 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:19; and with these passages, John 17:26, "that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." Thus love in the Christian is an energy within him, but whose source is without him; a current streaming forth toward God, believers, and all men, but depending for its supply upon the exhaustless fountain in the heart of Christ. Accordingly, Paul writes to the Philippians: "I long after you all in the bowels (or, *heart*) of Christ Jesus," and exhorts them to be "having the same love." (Phil. 2:2.) **The patient waiting for Christ**—literally, *the patience (or, endurance) of Christ*. We are to have *Christ's* endurance; namely, such as he possessed, shown in his sufferings, and such as he will bestow upon believers in theirs. Notice that 'love' and 'endurance' are also linked together in the opening of the First Epistle.

**6-16. Specific apostolic commands.** We hear of disorder among you. Certain of your members have discontinued their quiet daily labor, and have become religious busybodies. This is contrary to our express instructions, which we took pains to enforce by example. We command you to withdraw from these disturbers of the church's good order. Be not weary yourselves in daily well-doing, and for a time exclude from your fellowship those disturbers. Yet count them brothers still.

**6. Command you**—commands of which he had just given an intimation in ver. 4. Very marked in this Epistle, as contrasted with the first, is the tone of authority. Notice 'obey' in ver. 14, and the four times reiterated 'command' in this chapter. Growing irregularities called for disciplinary treatment, which Paul in Christ's name now requires the church to apply. He was invested as an apostle with authority and with power. His authority was not arbitrary or despotic, but bestowed for initiating and perfecting the organization of churches; see 2 Cor. 3:10, "the authority which the Lord gave me for building up";

our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which <sup>1</sup>they received of us.

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read *ye*.

compare also 2 Cor. 10:8. It was asserted not in his own name, but expressly in the name of Christ, as in the present instance. It referred back to commands received directly from Christ, and was attested on occasions by the exercise of prophetic and miraculous powers. It was an authority to be enforced also, if necessary. "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. 4:20, 21.) See also 1 Cor. 5:3, 4. The case of Ananias and Sapphira had shown at an early date in the church's history that the apostolic authority was not addressed to the reason merely, but might and would be supernaturally enforced.

**In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**—it is not I who command you, but Jesus; compare 1 Thess. 4:2, "commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus"; also ver. 15 of the same chapter. **Withdraw yourselves**—evidently addressed to the church, to the whole membership; there seems to be no reason whatever for concluding, with Olshausen, that it is the elders who are primarily addressed. **Separation** from the offenders is enjoined; as repeated below, "have no company with" them. That this does not necessarily imply formal excommunication by vote of the church is undoubtedly true. Still it would be a suspension from the fellowship and privileges of the church, whether or not it took place by a formal act. See an exhortation, not an express command, in Rom. 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned, and turn away from them." Observe that in the present case a sterner treatment is enjoined than in the previous letter, it being there only, "admonish the disorderly."

(1 Thess. 5:14.) **From every brother**—the precepts of this section relate entirely to duties to Christian brethren, to those within the church. Toward these, as cannot be the case toward those without, it is sometimes necessary for a church to take positive and decisive judicial action; on this point see, more fully, 1 Cor. 5:

9-13; also compare 1 Thess. 4:12; Col. 4:5. **Disorderly**—a word used only in these two epistles, once in 1 Thess. 5:14, and three times in the present section. In the Greek it is either the adjective (*ἀτάκτος*), or a derivative from the same. It is primarily a military word (like our *tactics*), and describes a soldier who is out of line, who leaves his proper place in the ranks, and is insubordinate. The specific application in the present passage appears plainly from what follows. It designates not lawless disturbers of the community, not contentious or quarrelsome persons, not the intentionally vicious. Nor is the reference here to violations of order in the meetings, or in the public worship of the church. It is those 'that work not at all, but are busybodies'—persons who, instead of minding their own business, "bustle about," as Riggебach puts it, "in fanatical idleness." They neglected daily labor, became, or were liable to become, dependents upon their brethren, left their posts of daily duty, and betook themselves to religious gossip and star-gazing. This disorderly sort of a religion was not altogether a surprising phenomenon. It sprang partly from a misunderstanding, partly from a perversion, of the instructions received from Paul himself. If the Lord was near, and the Great Day was ere long to dawn, or had indeed already begun, the temptation was great to live at random, and give over methodical industry. The ready beneficence that prevailed in the early churches would enhance the temptation. But the general safety was endangered by these stragglers from the ranks, no matter how well meaning or sincere. Disorganization, it is plain, was threatening the little Christian community in Thessalonica. Order must be restored, and that by obedience to the apostolic precept and example. For in the first place the course of these brethren was contrary to the apostle's express instruction. **Not after the tradition**, etc.—better, *instruction*. See note on 2:15, referring, not merely to the instruction given orally during his stay in Thessalonica, but in writing subsequently. In the first letter he had written emphatically

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but that wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us,

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him

upon this very point: "and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands even as we charged you."

**7. Know how ye ought to follow (imitate) us.** Know, in other words, what example was set for their imitation; that they were bound to imitate that example Paul assumes his readers to know. **Behaved not ourselves disorderly**—that is, in the sense explained above. The life they had led there had been one of constant, regular labor and service. See the review of this period of his ministry given in 1 Thess. 2: 1-12.

**8. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought.** 'For nought'—that is, without paying for it; we did not live at any other man's expense. The apostle adopted the same course with most other churches. From the church at Philippi, on several occasions, both previous to this letter and afterward, he received pecuniary support, but he notes it as an exception to his usual procedure. (1 Thess. 4: 15.) See also the notes on 1 Thess. 2: 9, where he uses the same language as here. He mentions two motives for adopting this course: first, in order not, without necessity, to be a burden upon others—and these in Thessalonica, it is to be remembered, were themselves suffering from poverty and persecution; second, as stated in ver. 9, he would train his converts in habits of Christian industry. It had another object also, alluded to elsewhere; namely, to preclude suspicion of mercenary motives, and emphatically to give the lie to the slanders which his enemies were ever ready to circulate.

**9. Not because we have not power, or, the right (ἰσχοντα).** 'Right' is here the proper translation, as also in Heb. 13: 10; Rev. 22: 14; 1 Cor., chap. 9, throughout. Noyes, "authority." It was his 'right,' Paul reminds them, to put the burden of his support upon them, a point he insists on at length in his first letter to the Corinthians, just cited. "What soldier

ever serveth at his own charges?" "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?"

"Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." The right of maintenance is the point here. Another personal right that he forebore to assert, when the welfare of the cause of Christ did not require it, is referred to in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (2:6); namely, the right to marked deference and honor as the bearer of apostolic rank. In such ways Paul illustrated by example the forbearance inculcated in his precepts. See Phil. 4: 5: "Let your forbearance be known unto all men"; also Rom. 14: 19, and its context. He too, however, could demand his rights when the honor of his Master's name was concerned, or the success of the gospel—for instance, at Philippi. Compare Acts 16: 37.

**10. For even when we were with you.** 'For' continues the thought of ver. 7: "You yourselves know—it is not a new command, for," etc. **If any would (rather, will) not work,** etc.—a proverb among Pagans and Jews both, but in this connection it is a specific command with reference to the administration of the church. It had to do particularly with the management of Christian beneficence. Those who were unable to work were entitled to support; those who refused to work, even if they alleged religious pretexts, should not be maintained by the charity of their brethren. The precept may have seemed harsh in its application to particular cases, but it is not difficult to perceive its importance for the healthy life and growth of the church in this formative period. Bengel singularly misses the point in regarding this not so much a command to the church, as the logical premise of an implied exhortation to the offenders; he completes it thus: "But every man eats, therefore let him labor." The exact force of the command should be noticed, to guard

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are **busybodies**.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle,

11 eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are **busybodies**.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren,

13 be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey-

against a misapplication. Paul does not say, whoever does not work shall not eat; but whoever *will* not work.

As to the view taken in the early church of the important matter of labor in its relation to beneficence, see Uhlhorn's "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," pp. 134-136.

**11. For we hear.** This verse explains the situation, and is the key to the whole passage. Paul, before leaving Thessalonica, had seen indications of impatience, restlessness, and perhaps laziness on the part of a few. He now hears that these are **working not at all, but are busybodies**—idleness and mischief-making meddlesomeness went hand in hand. See 1 Tim. 5:13. So Watts:

"But Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do."

There is a word-play in the Greek (*μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους, ἀλλὰ περιεργομένους*) which can scarcely be reproduced in English. Jowett renders: "busy only with what is not their own 'business'; Conybeare: "busybodies who do no business."

The evil was not a doctrinal heresy, not a flagrant vice, but a *disorder*. All the conditions favored the rise and spread of such disorders among the new converts. In a Pagan community manual labor was not honored, but looked upon with contempt as unworthy of a free man. It was to be resorted to only under the pressure of necessity. Now if the hoped-for deliverance was near, if the King was just about to come, why carry on business and provide for the future, as had been their wont? Why should not the wealthier brethren put their property into a common fund sufficient to support them all during the short remaining interval? It is not to be wondered at that some among these ostracized, persecuted, poverty-stricken converts yielded to the obvious temptation of the hour, and became restless, impatient, "weary in well doing."

**12. Such we command and exhort.** The 'some' referred to above are here directly addressed. They would, of course, be present

when the letter was read to the assembled church. **By (in) the Lord Jesus Christ** (see 1 Thess. 4:1) "we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus," and the note there.

**That with quietness they work**, etc. The same as in 1 Thess. 4:11; there, however, given as an earnest exhortation; here, more stringently, as a command. They were to engage in labor, and earn their own living *quietly*. Not merely "with a quiet mind" (Alford), but in a quiet manner. There had been, it would appear, too much talking, going from house to house, intermeddling with affairs not their own; 'with quietness' is appropriately made a prominent feature of the precept. Compare 1 Peter 3:4: "A meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

**13. Be not weary in well-doing.** The well-doing meant is plainly that which pertains to the subject in hand; that is, quiet and orderly daily labor, faithful performance of everyday tasks. It deserves attention here that the writer is not speaking of any form of what is ordinarily called "Christian work," a phrase with quite misleading implications; not of proclaiming the gospel, or of any kind of philanthropic or charitable service. It is the well-doing of industrious bread-earning—*manual labor* for the most part. This was the well-doing then specially needed at Thessalonica for the welfare of the church, and the need has not ceased. It is one form of "the patience of Christ," referred to in ver. 5, given in the example of Jesus the carpenter, as well as in that of Paul the tent-maker. Nowhere is the believer's endurance more hardly tried than in "the common round, the daily task" of ordinary life. Hence the exhortation, 'Be not weary'; that is, "be steadfast." It is one of Paul's favorite phrases in which to urge endurance—the heroic virtue he so highly esteemed, and of which he was an eminent example. The word (*ἐνεργεω*) occurs also in Luke 18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them that they ought always to pray, and *not to faint*."

**14, 15.** These verses reiterate distinctly and

note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

eth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he 15 may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

explicitly the main point of the section. **Our word by this epistle**; namely, the commands contained in the preceding verses. **Note that man, and have no company with him.** Take note of him, and have him known to the brethren as one from whom you are to keep separate; the same requirement as "withdraw yourselves," in ver. 6. The object, so far as the person himself is concerned, is to shame him into obedience, to lead him to return to the path of duty. Hence your action regarding him must be taken in a spirit of fraternal love. **Yet (or, and) count him not as an enemy** (the 'yet' of the English translators is not required by the Greek of the sentence, or by the general context) **but admonish him as a brother.** Brotherly admonition will be the appropriate means to bring him back to an orderly walk.

The directions which are here laid down in a spirit of tender affection are to be carried out in a like spirit. Obedience to authority, submission to the settled order of the church, can be insisted on and secured without impairing Christian love.

The Apostle Paul's assertion of his apostolic authority in the churches he had founded, which this passage implies, has been referred to above. Significant also is the implication that each church was vested with full authority to maintain unimpaired its own integrity and order. "Let all things be done unto edifying" is a principle which applies not only to the conduct of a church's worship, but to its corporate life throughout. There are cases, as in this instance, where a church is bound to separate from its fellowship even those whom it has no reason to regard as unregenerate. Without passing judgment on the offender's personal relation to his Saviour, it decides that the welfare of the church requires his exclusion. Not only scandalous offences and the denial of fundamental doctrines, but any course of action that manifestly interrupts the "edifying"—the upbuilding—of the church, and tends to disorganization, may call for disciplinary treatment.

Outside of the gospels this is the earliest pre-

cept in the matter of church discipline. No definite official or technical procedure is appointed for this case by the apostle; how they were to take note of the individual, in what manner, or to what extent he was to be cut off from the fellowship and privileges of the church, is not indicated. It seems evident that the duty of admonition and discipline is enjoined upon *the church*, not merely upon certain officers, and not upon individuals, as such, to abstain, for instance, from ordinary business dealings, or from social intercourse with the offender. The action enjoined with reference to the disobedient member could have no efficacy, except as proceeding from the body. It is his exclusion for a time from the body or community of believers; he is not to be considered one of them. Such action would of course imply non-participation in the Lord's Supper, the very hearthstone of the church's associate life. It is intended to have effect temporarily; the object, on the one hand, is the health and welfare of the church; on the other, the welfare of the person himself, that he might be restored to a better course.

**16. The Lord of peace himself give you peace.** Peace, in the language of Scripture, is frequently a comprehensive term for spiritual well-being; it is the blessedness that comes to be in the believer's soul through the indwelling and agency of the Holy Spirit. See note on 1 Thess. 1:1. Too many have followed Chrysostom in regarding the words here as a prayer that they may be kept from dissension, particularly in connection with the above matters of discipline. But this is at variance with Paul's use of the word in his benedictions; it is an inward bliss, a peace within the soul of each believer, that he invokes.

Whether 'Lord' here refers specifically to Christ, or the phrase is simply the equivalent of "God of peace" in 1 Thess. 5:23, it is impossible and quite unnecessary to determine. See, however, note on ver. 5, above; also, John 16:33, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace"; John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." **By all means**—literally, "in

17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle; so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

17 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, 18 which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

every manner," or "in every way." This "inward sunshine of the soul" will transfigure life in all its relations—the earthly and external, as well as the spiritual. To him who has the fullness of this peace, "the earth and every common sight" will be "apparelled in celestial light," and no day, no duty will be poor or common.

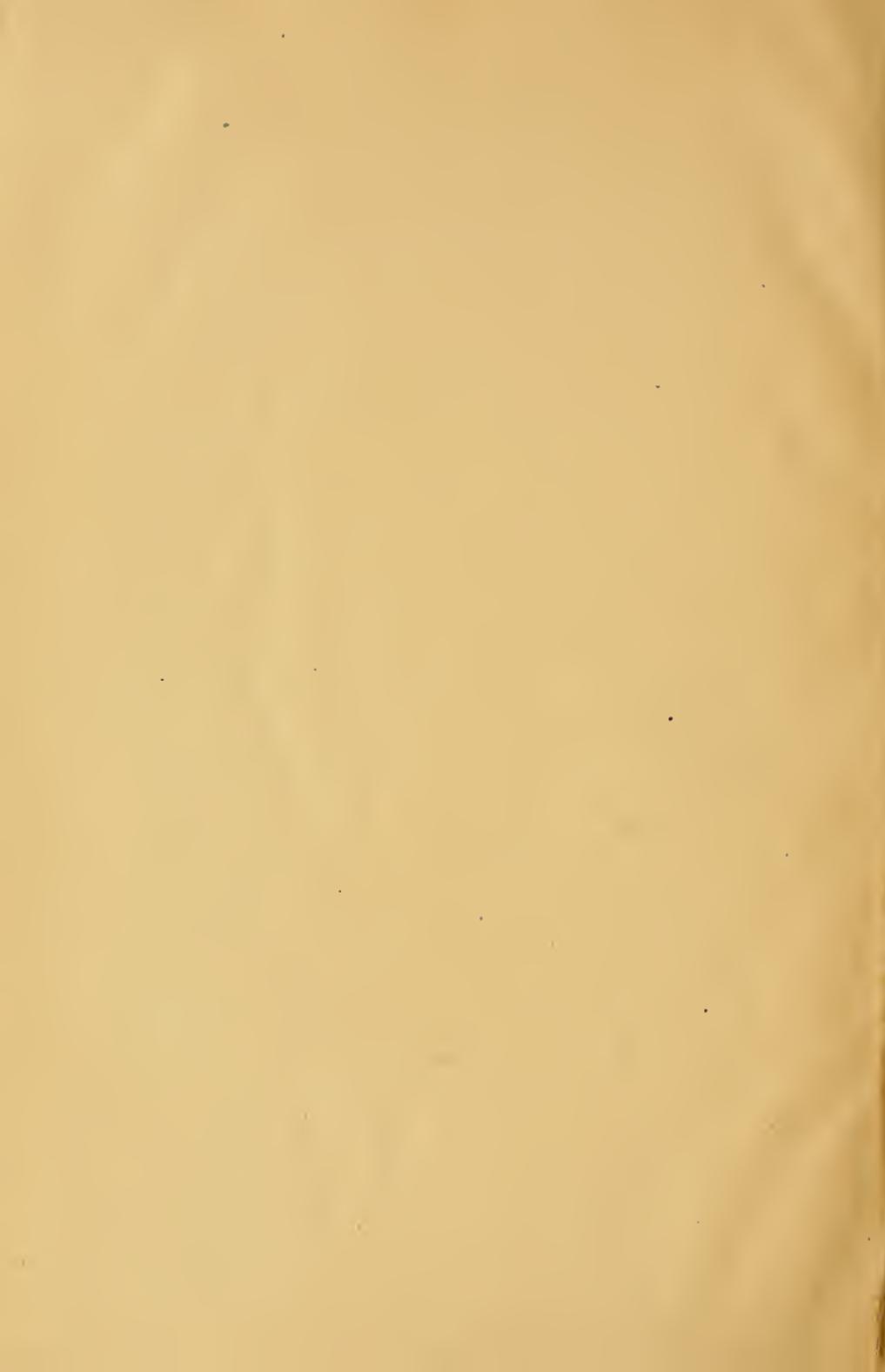
**17, 18.** These two verses originally were in autograph. The letter which Paul has thus far been dictating to an amanuensis, perhaps Timothy, is ended. He now takes the pen and adds these closing sentences with his own hand, in attestation that it is indeed from him—his custom, as he tells here, in all his letters.

That is to say, he usually wrote with his own hand a closing greeting or benediction, sometimes, it would appear from this instance, including his own name.

**So I write**—that is, "in such characters as ver. 17, 18 appeared written with." (Ellicott.) A special reason for calling the attention of the church to his autograph may perhaps be found in 2:2, above. If a forged letter was presented, it could be detected in this way. They were to receive none as genuine without his sign manual at the close of it. **The grace of our Lord**, etc. On this benediction, see note at close of the First Epistle.









Date Due

N 15 '45

~~DECEMBER~~

N 26 '45

MY 5 '48

19 '48

MR 5 '53

~~EX-1014~~

~~13052~~

~~NOV 5 '55~~

~~EX-1014~~

~~13052~~

~~FACULTY~~

~~MAY 23 '80~~

~~JAN 31 1995~~

~~C~~

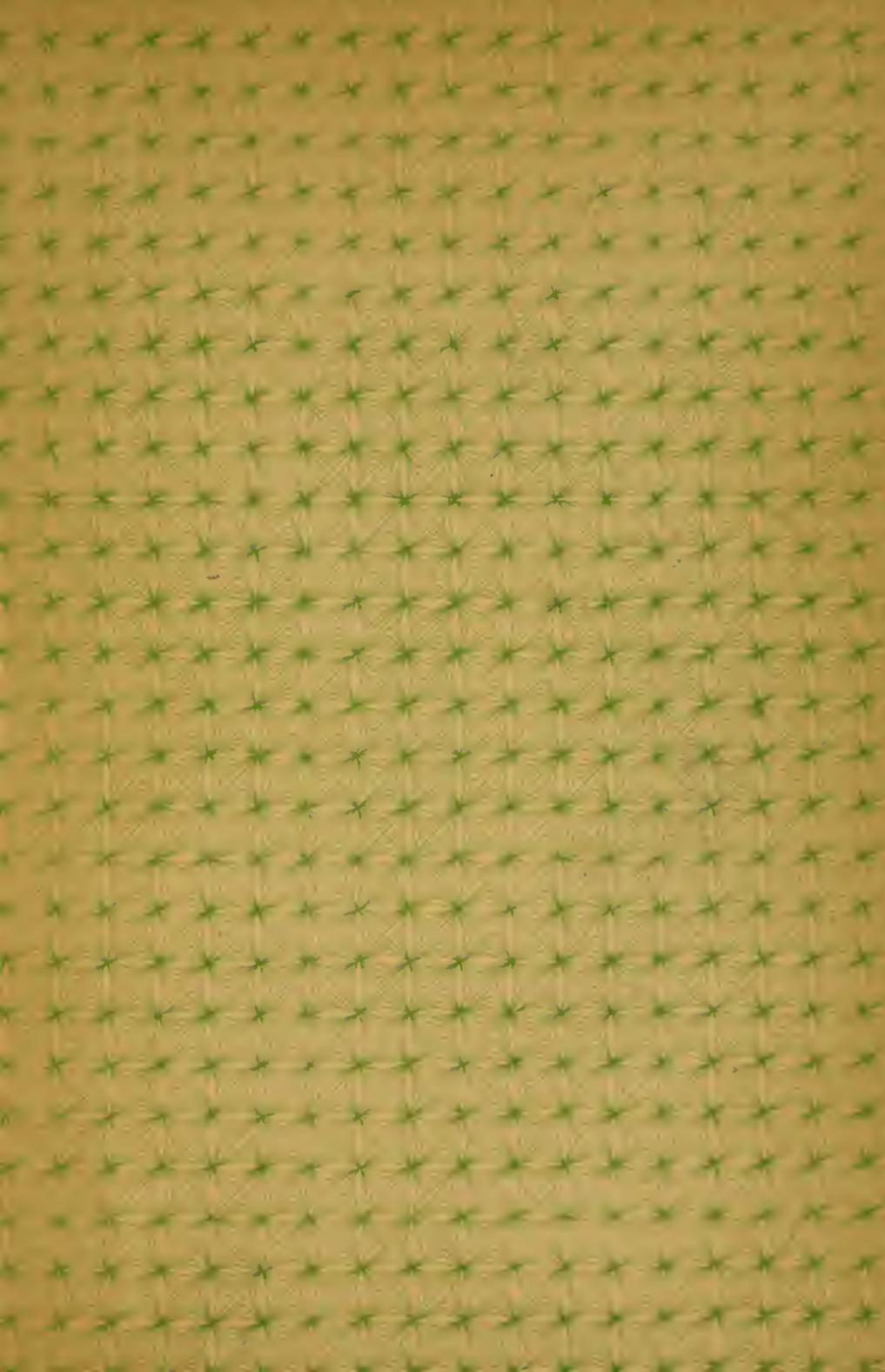
~~RECORDED~~

~~OCT 21 '88~~

~~C~~

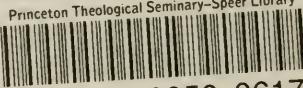
~~MAY 25 1990~~





BS2341 .A512 v.5  
Commentary on the epistle to the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00056 0617